

# **Military Order Disobedience: An Analysis of Personal and Political Transformation**

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## Abstract

The discipline of Peace and Conflict Studies attempts, in part, to understand the origins of conflicts and to propose strategies of intervention aimed at transforming the attitudes of the conflicting parties. However, although there is a large range of intervention approaches, understanding the nature of the desired transformation on an individual level is still under-researched.

This project aims to identify and conceptualize processes of personal transformation in conflict situations, by analysing the personal narratives of soldiers in Israel, who, during their military service, chose to disobey an order or to object to carrying on their military service entirely, for conscientious reasons. The question this study addresses is: what are the social and psychological mechanisms which generate military obedience, and what enables some soldiers to challenge and overcome these impediments. This further question concerns the transformation processes which lead a soldier to conscientiously object.

Using Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA), 23 Israeli selective conscientious objectors (SCOs) were interviewed to answer these questions. The analysis sheds light on the social, cognitive, emotional and moral aspects of the transformation process and has helped generate an integrative model of transformation. The theoretical implications of a psychological theory of change and for the practice of conflict intervention are discussed.

This study contributes to the understanding of personal transformative processes leading to nonviolent practice of SCOs.

## Preface

*“Where a Baal Teshuvah stands, even a completely righteous person cannot stand”*

(Bavli Talmud, Sanhedrin, 91, 1).

This famous proverb by the ancient Jewish sages emphasizes the virtue of people who take the effort to reflect on their beliefs and actions and, when needed, acknowledge their mistakes and consciously change their ways. Although originally *Baal Teshuvah* means a person who has come back to God and religious practice, it is the ability to correct one's own ways that is admired, rather than faith and religious practice as such.

There are many people whom I would like to thank for playing important roles in my personal journey as I was conducting this research. I would like to thank my partner, Keren, and my two daughters, Tamar and Yasmin, who took an incredible leap of faith and travelled across the world with me on this adventure, and whose love and understanding make wherever we are a home far away from home for me.

I also want to thank my supervisors, Professor Kevin Clements and Dr. Katerina Standish from the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies for their unconditional support, sound advice and faith in me and in my research project.

A special thank you to Michael Moxham, my language editor, whose love for the English language and broad horizons made the process of writing this thesis a fascinating intellectual journey, in which considerations such as Oxford commas were discussed (and rejected) as seriously and profoundly as conscientious objection.

Finally, I would like to thank twenty-three courageous men who made the time and effort to share their life stories of their personal and political struggles with me, in times when

they and others like them are threatened and prosecuted in Israel. Their willingness to re-examine their own beliefs and take a moral stand, while paying the price, surely make them stand where even a completely righteous person cannot stand.

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## List of Abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
BDS	Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement
CO	Conscientious Objector/Objection
GCO	General Conscientious Objector
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PCO	Pacifist Conscientious Objector
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
SCO	Selective Conscientious Objector

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

#### Peace and Conflict Research

The field of Peace and Conflict Studies is still relatively young with the main concepts still being debated and reviewed frequently (Avruch, 2013). Early framing of the field's goals revolved around reduction of conflict levels using terms such as *conflict management* (Likert & Likert, 1976), *conflict resolution* and *conflict prevention* (John, 1990). However, following criticism of these approaches suggesting that they neglect some constructive aspects of conflicts (see, for example: Burgess & Burgess, 1996; Tjosvold, 1985) a shift to other approaches took place, emphasizing the opportunities that conflict holds for positive change. The focus then shifted to *conflict transformation* (Lederach, 1995; Miall, 2004) and *peacebuilding* (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000; Paris, 1997; Schirch, 2005).

While different, it could be argued that these characterizations share an assumption that when conflicting parties handle conflict they tend to escalate and sustain hostilities between themselves (Glasl, 1982). For this reason, peace and conflict scholars devote much of their work to developing models of conflict intervention ranging from interpersonal dispute resolution to large-scale international peacebuilding (Dixon, 1996; Lewicki, Weiss, & Lewin, 1992). Many of those conflict intervention models have been practised in the field and their outcomes evaluated, with findings indicating that there is still room to improve the impact on their target groups (Dixon, 1996; Regan, 1996).

Each intervention model operates according to a *theory of change*, a concept most commonly used in evaluation research. Following more general definition made by Weiss (1972) and Connell and Kubisch (1998), Shapiro defines a theory of change as “the causal processes through which change comes about as a result of a program's strategies and action. It relates to how practitioners believe individual, intergroup, and social/systemic

change happens and how, specifically, their actions will produce positive results” (Shapiro, 2005, p. 1). In other words, a theory of change represents both the problem which the scholar or practitioner identifies, such as prejudice or poverty, and the appropriate intervention which would address this problem in the most effective manner and lead to the best outcome. In the case of conflict intervention this outcome is defined in Galtung's (1969) terms as *negative peace*, that is an end of violence and hostilities but more hopefully, *positive peace*, which represents constructive relations of friendship between former rivals. Thus, the theory of change defines the desired transformation which conflicting parties aspire to and the means of intervention that such transformation demands.

Although the range and number of intervention models and approaches is quite large (Katz, 1999; Lewicki et al., 1992), understanding the nature of the desired transformation at the individual level is still under-researched. As noted above, the notion of transformation was introduced to the field of peace and conflict studies over two decades ago. The nature of transformation which both scholars and practitioners have in mind, however, varies from theory to theory and from one intervention model to the other. Lederach (1995), for example, refers in his definition of conflict transformation to large-scale processes of changes in violence reduction and an increase in social justice. Folger and Bush (1996), on the other hand, focus their notion of transformation on the relations between conflicting parties, with the work aimed at transforming the destructive cycle to a constructive one. However, very little research dedicated to transformative processes in conflict contexts has explicitly addressed the question: what change processes should individuals undergo as part of conflict intervention.

### **Sociological and Social-Psychological research**

Protracted conflicts, that is, conflicts which are recalcitrant, intense, deadlocked and extremely difficult to resolve (Coleman, 2000), have provided sociologists and social-

psychologists with an extensive field in which to study the nature of social and psychological processes that both individuals and collectives undergo under the highly stressful conditions of intense conflict.

The primary motivation for this line of research arose from atrocities inflicted by one group on another, such as those that occurred during the Second World War and the Holocaust (Smith & Haslam, 2012). Therefore, the most typical and most widely researched phenomenon is the increase in hostility towards the out-group and its members, especially in the context of perceived inter-group conflict, which individuals, as well as collectives, experience. This increase in hostility has many manifestations, such as the development of in-group preferences (Sheriff, 1958, 1966), out-group biases (developing prejudices, delegitimization of the out-group's goals, values and needs and demonization of its members), negative escalating cycles of violence and the development of cultures of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013), among others. The impression of humanity that this literature creates suggests that in the absence of any external intervention, conflicts make intergroup relations deteriorate.

However, despite the overwhelming evidence demonstrating increases in hostility among people in conflict, in almost every case of violent conflict there are people who undergo contrary processes of hostility reduction. Although usually significantly lower in number, the processes these people undergo possess a potentially compelling ability to resolve conflict and support post-conflict processes of reconciliation.

## **The Current Study**

### **Rationale**

This study attempts to identify the process of transformation leading individuals to reduce their hostility to out-groups by taking a contrasting direction of inquiry from the one most commonly used in both academic and evaluation research. Instead of investigating the implementation of a conflict intervention model and assessing its outcomes, effectiveness



and impact, this study focuses on individuals who have undergone a transformative process and seeks to understand the nature of this process through their own personal narratives.

### **Research Population**

The research population chosen for this study consists of Israeli soldiers who, during either their mandatory or reserve duty service, objected to following certain orders or to continuing being soldiers altogether, for moral reasons. The assumption made is that if at a certain point an individual was willing to enlist in the military and fully obey his superiors' orders and at a later point refused to do so, a transformative process had taken place which could be studied to teach us valuable lessons about how individuals move from acceptance to rejection of military service by conscientiously objecting.

The case of conscientious objectors (COs) was extensively researched in the context of the refusal of civilians being conscripted in the military in wartime. Examples for such cases are during the world wars and the Vietnam war, or of serving soldiers who refused to take part in specific military missions, in which deployment to active duty overseas was usually the trigger for the act of refusal, although the decision in principle might have been made earlier (Baxter, 1968; Crane & Burton, 1986; Peterson, Fite, & Peterson, 1986; Sibley & Jacob, 1952; Wright, 1931).

However, since the ultimate goal of this study is to explore the shift from pro-violent behaviour to anti-violent behaviour in the context of conflict, the subjects of this literature review will be enlisted active soldiers, who at a certain point refused to take part in a particular military mission or in military service altogether.

### **Research Question**

Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: what are the social and psychological mechanisms which encourage obedience to military authority,

what enables some soldiers to resist such authority and what is the nature of the transformation process they undergo, leading them to become conscientious objectors.

### **Structure of this Thesis**

Chapter two reviews literature concerning the first part of the research question, namely the social and psychological barriers which make conscientious objection an extremely uncommon practice among soldiers in Israel. It starts with a general background and typology of conscientious objection to military service. Then the chapter moves on to review group-related psychological phenomena, the roots of inter-group tension and hostility and the implications of these for individuals' perceptions of other groups. Following this, the literature on barriers to conflict resolution is reviewed, classifying these barriers into the different components of the culture of conflict, and demonstrating its relevance to barriers for conscientious objection. Special attention is given to the way in which masculinity is constructed prior to and during military service, and the possible implications this holds for COs. Last, challenges presented by the state and social structures are addressed in the context of reducing the likelihood of soldiers' dissent. These concepts and mechanisms are then integrated into a three-layered model, illustrating both the different ways in which conscientious objection is reduced to a minimum, and the array of challenges that COs face in their journey from being mainstream soldiers to their act of objection.

The third chapter addresses the second part of the research question, namely which existing conceptual and theoretical frameworks may explain, at least in part, the process of transformation from obedience to disobedience among Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers. The review of the literature on transformative processes differentiates four separate modes of transformation. First, the social mode of transformation refers to social circumstances or dynamics which enable or drive social dissent, that is, objecting to one's own group norms

intended to change the group for the better and the development of new group norms. (Packer, 2007). Second, the moral transformation mode addresses possible explanations for people changing their moral reasoning and ethical convictions. Third, the emotional transformation mode relates to the growth of care and compassion toward the suffering of others. Finally, the cognitive transformation mode is concerned with the ways in which people may change their attitudes and perceptions regarding in-groups and out-groups and their members. Following this review of the four modes of transformation, I will then focus on its implications for relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinians.

The fourth chapter presents methodological issues for this research. It opens with a discussion of the theoretical considerations of the research question and elaborates on the rationale for choosing qualitative data analysis (QDA) as the most suitable methodology. The discussion then revolves around the implementation of QDA methodology in this research: definition of the research population and characteristics of the research group, recruitment of participants, ethical dilemmas, ontological and epistemological considerations and the interview process.

The next five chapters analyse the findings of this research. The first three of these review the main stations in the participants' life stories, and the latter two focus on the process of transformation they experienced. In these chapters, central concepts are contextualised with relevant theory and literature.

Chapter five reviews the life stages emerging from the participants' narratives of their early childhood up to their enlistment in the IDF. It starts with their parents' political orientation and involvement, continues with their early socialization processes, the development of a political outlook and notions of masculinity, and ends describing their motivations for military service, as they approached the date of recruitment.

Chapter six follows the participants' experiences from the period of their military service – first as mandatory service and then as reserve duty soldiers, when they spent up to one month on military duty and the rest of the year as ordinary civilians. The chapter begins with the challenges of basic training and the participants' adjustment to military life. Then general impressions of military service are shared, with specific emphasis on experiences of militarized masculinity and its role in each participant's personal development. Periods of service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) receive particular attention, especially in regard to contact with and impressions of both Palestinians and settlers. The chapter follows with a general description of the post- mandatory service period and the participants' change of perspective from a military to a civilian one. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the participants' contact with Palestinians as civilians. Two time periods are referred to: before and after military service. Special attention is given to planned dialogue encounters that various participants had participated in, either as adolescents or adults or in several cases, in both periods. Possible explanations are discussed as to why participants generally felt that these encounters had stronger impact on them in the post-military service period. The second part of chapter nine

Chapter seven focuses on the phase of conscientious objection in the participants' life stories. It begins with their thoughts and dilemmas regarding conscientious objection, followed by the act of objection and its consequences. The chapter ends with a review of the participants' attitudes towards a series of issues, including Zionism, militarism, pacifism and alternative forms of masculinity.

Chapter eight takes a closer and more detailed look at the process of transformation described in the participants' narratives. It separates each mode of transformation and ends with a proposal for an integrative model in which the emotional, social and cognitive modes of transformation are invoked. This chapter begins with the emotional mode, in which two

main emotional experiences play transformative roles – growing mistrust in the system and subsequent increases of personal stress. Next is the social transformation mode, which begins with alienation and drifting apart from the peer-group and continues with the search for an alternative moral community or peer-group of COs, and concludes when the CO joins one of them or both. Finally, in the cognitive mode of transformation, three stages of transformation are reviewed: destabilization, ambivalence and ripening for the act of objection. As no one of the modes on its own provides a sufficient explanation for the process of transformation, the three modes are integrated into a comprehensive model.

The ninth chapter summarizes participants' reflections on their experiences of transformation. Specifically, two aspects which were expected to be present in the participants' narratives were missing and when asked about them, participants dismissed them. The first is a moral mode of transformation which almost all participants deny, holding to the notion that their moral values remained intact throughout their lives. The second, is the absence of compassion in the emotional mode of transformation. Several possible theoretical and empirical explanations are discussed. The chapter concludes with the two main changes as participants see them. The first is identity and social identification, and the second is understanding of the social and political reality which shapes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Finally, chapter ten discusses the findings in regard to the research question of this study: what are the social and psychological mechanisms which promote the compliance of soldiers and make dissent unlikely and what enables some soldiers to refuse taking part in military action for moral reasons. This is discussed in the context of the transformation process that leads them to the act of conscientious objection. It discusses separately the barriers to conscientious objection and the process of transformation which emerges from the findings of this study. It follows up by discussing the integrative model of

transformation presented in chapter eight and its theoretical implications and suggestions for the practice of conflict intervention and process design. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

### **Style and other Considerations for this Thesis**

#### **Style**

This thesis was written following the style guidelines for the American Psychological Association (APA), 6<sup>th</sup> edition. However, three exceptions are made to the general guidelines. First, quotations of participants in the research are presented in italic font to make it easier for readers to distinguish them from literature quotations. At the end of each participant's quotation, his pseudonym is shown in brackets, as well as the line numbers in the original transcription in Hebrew, where the quotation appears. Second, although the guidelines for APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition do not recommend footnotes, in some places where clarification or comments are required, they appear as footnotes. Finally, as APA is based in the United States, it recommends using American spelling in writing. However, as this thesis was written in New Zealand, the local spelling, based on British English, was used as a tribute to the host country and university in which this study took place.

#### **Research Focus on Male COs**

Although in recent decades, western countries are integrating women in combat units in their militaries, and there is some literature about these female combatants (Golan, 1997; Khadka, 2012; Sasson-Levy, Levy, & Lomsky-Feder, 2011; Sasson-Levy, 2003), it is still difficult to find examples of female combatants who refuse to follow an order in battle or in military mission unlike the case of female General Conscientious Objectors (GCOs) in Israel, on whom some research has been conducted. (See, for example: Barak-Erez, 2006; Natanel, 2012; Rimalt, 2007). For this reason, the present study focuses solely on male

soldiers and their narratives of military socialization and masculinity formation, as well as the process leading them to become conscientious objectors.

### **Terms and Concepts Related to the Israeli Context and the IDF**

Throughout the participants' narratives, certain terms, concepts and names are mentioned which have special significance. These terms are clarified in brackets or in footnotes.

## Chapter 2: Barriers to Conscientious Objection

Meet Michael, a young Israeli soldier – 18, 19 or 20 years old, just graduated from high school, and still moving from adolescence to adulthood. Or perhaps he is a reserve duty soldier in his late twenties with several weeks each year, during which he abandons his daily life – wife and children, studies, work, and friends – and turns into a soldier. Michael would like to think that he is a good person. He is trying to do what is best for his family, community and country. Michael feels proud to defend them from countless threats posed by hostile countries and terrorist organizations. At the same time, he objects to harming the innocent – civilian men, women, children and the elderly, although he knows that unfortunately, bad things tend to happen in war - and this is war.

Michael's comrades in his military unit are his closest friends and have been for quite a while. They go on patrols, eat and sleep together. They depend on each other to deal with the tedium of the military. When they are on patrol, Michael puts his safety and his life in his comrades' hands and they do the same for him. They are the only ones who can really understand what Michael is going through – his fears, tiredness and homesickness – much more than any of his other friends or the family he left back home. These are the people who trust Michael and depend on him coming through for them, whenever they need him.

Within Michael's unit there is a policy of zero tolerance of not doing one's job to the full - this is what makes it tick. It keeps everyone safe and it is expected of each soldier. But what might happen if Michael encounters moral difficulties with what he is required to do as a soldier? What makes it extremely unlikely that soldiers will ever refuse to follow orders given to them by their superiors, which civilians would find controversial? How do the military and the state ensure that soldiers maintain discipline and commitment? This is the focus of this chapter.

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Military service contradicts, almost by definition, the human survival instinct. It can be extremely dangerous, it requires the individual soldier to face challenges which he probably would never have to face as a civilian, making him act aggressively, constantly having to choose between a morally bad option of harming others and a worse option of being harmed by enemy soldiers, paramilitary fighters, or hostile civilians. However, the majority of soldiers accept these terms and conform to military rules and expectations. This raises the question – why?

A conscientious objector is defined as “a person who refuses either to bear arms or to serve in the military or continue to serve in the military because of religious or moral beliefs that oppose killing” (Moskos & Chambers, 1993, p. 5). This chapter reviews different aspects of the challenges to conscientious objection, in respect to the first research question of this dissertation, that is, what are the barriers and measures which prevent soldiers from refusing an order in battle or avoiding participation in action? Or, in other words, what makes it so rare for serving soldiers to explore conscientious objection?

Refusing to follow a specific order in battle or to participate in a military operation altogether entails quite a few challenges for soldiers - cognitive, emotional and behavioural, as well as social and structural ones. These challenges will be reviewed in the following order. First, the social-psychological forces that discipline group members into conforming to and remaining loyal to their group. Second, the main psychological implications of intergroup conflict situations, regarding the attitudes and perceptions of both the in-group (one's own group) and out-group (any other group to which one doesn't belong). Third, the gender-related implications of masculine self-perception and of social value for male soldiers that prevent them from objecting to essentially masculine combat action. Last, the sanctions - imposed by both state and social structures - in order to discourage soldiers'

disobedience. It is important to note that the structures presented are specific to the Israeli context, which is the focus of this research.

### **Conscientious Objection – Context and Definition**

It is hard to identify the first act of conscientious objection recorded in history. However, the first legislation in this matter is documented and dates back to 1575 CE, when Dutch Mennonites were recognized as COs by the Dutch prince, William of Orange (William the Silent). Later, other Christian religious groups, such as the Quakers and Jehovah's Witnesses, were recognized as COs (Brock, 1998, 2006). Thus, CO was at first recognized as religiously triggered. It was only later, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when non-religious CO became common (Moskos & Chambers, 1993).

The scholarly literature on COs differentiates between two types of CO: *Selective Conscientious Objectors* (SCOs) and *General Conscientious Objectors* (GCOs), who are sometimes referred to as Pacifist Conscientious Objectors (PCOs) (Clifford, 2011; Moskos & Chambers, 1993; Walters, 1973). Objectors of the first type – SCOs - do not object to wars as such. These objectors support what they define as *just wars* but at the same time object to unjust ones. In contrast, GCOs reject participation in any form of military operation and violent struggles (even for causes they support) or membership of military organizations altogether (Coady, 1997). As the focus of the current research is on acting soldiers who turn to COs, their action falls under the category of SCOs.

*Just war theory* (Elshtain, 1992; Evans, 2005; Moseley, 2004; Walzer 2002) is a field of philosophy and political science exploring ethical questions related to when war is justified or justifiable and when it is not. One of the modern era conventions of just war theory is that harm to civilians should be avoided as much as possible, thus differentiating between combatants and civilians. This differentiation is central in SCOs' considerations in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as their main reasoning is that active

participation in the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) harms the civilian population of the Palestinian inhabitants in a manner that cannot be justified by Israel's security needs.

### **Social and Group-Related Phenomena**

Social-psychological theory (that is, the psychology of people situated in a group context) addresses intermittently two different social contexts: the first one, *group psychology*, relates to the group as a unique and independent psychological entity, which has common perceptions and behaviours that cannot be explained as merely the sum of its human actors' perceptions and behaviours. The second perspective, *individual psychology in a group context*, looks into ways in which different social circumstances and interactions influence individuals' perceptions and behaviours. This section elaborates on these contexts and on their relevance to SCO.

#### **Group Psychology**

The earliest writing on the psychological phenomena of human groups drew a rather counterintuitive portrait, for its time, of human behaviour. In his book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Le Bon (1896) was the first to argue that a crowd is not merely a sum of the individuals comprising it, but rather it becomes an independent entity capable of generating a behavioural transformation amongst individuals, as they become members of a crowd. This transformation affects crowd members' thoughts, perceptions, emotions, decision-making processes and actions. According to Le Bon, this transformation includes reduction in intelligence, loss of self-inhibition (due to a euphoric sense of invincibility) and perhaps the most striking phenomenon, which Le Bon identifies, is the individual's loss of independence and autonomy. Within a group, an individual loses or gives up some of his or her intellectual and cognitive capacities, emotional sensitivity and, above all, sense of uniqueness. This psychological transformation spreads among the crowd by *contagion*, in

Le Bon's words, and the reference to the context of disease is obviously not accidental. Thus, Le Bon suggests that extreme ideas and behaviours arise in crowds by a process of expansion: opinions and behaviours expand rapidly within a crowd, creating norms for proper ways of thinking and acting and reducing their varieties between individuals. At the same time, and as a reward or a compensation for these losses, being part of a crowd provides individuals with a feeling of invulnerability, allowing them to unleash behaviours and utterances which otherwise may be considered inappropriate, such as irresponsibility to one's actions or aggression. However, despite being rather critical of the role of crowds in the psychology of their individuals, Le Bon did not determine that group processes are inevitably bound to lead to morally negative results. He clearly suggested that a group dynamic may lead to the development of positive norms as well. In his words: "A crowd is as easily heroic as criminal." (Le Bon, 1896, p. 25).

Following Le Bon, but unlike him, Freud (1922), in one of his very few essays on group psychology, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, argues that the individual's transformation in a crowd necessarily leads to morally negative results, that is, the development of offensive tendencies rather than peaceful or altruistic ones. He explains this in the following way: "[Being in a crowd] The apparently new characteristics which he then displays are in fact the manifestations of this unconscious, in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition" (Freud, 1922, p.10).

Although the notion of the group being an independent entity was introduced at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as described above, it took some time until the concept of group dynamic was empirically established by Kurt Lewin (1947), who argued that within a group, people tend to develop common perceptions and behaviours. Lewin's work paved the way for some further research that identified specific common group perceptions and behaviours, such as *groupthink* (Janis, 1971), which refers to group members' "conformity to the group's

values and ethics” (cited in: Turner & Pratkanis, 1998, p. 106), and *groupshift* (Silverthorne, 1971), which suggests that within a group people tend to either support more conservative or more radical decisions than the ones they would support as individuals. Both groupthink and groupshift are very well established empirically and clearly demonstrate how people in groups make good and bad decisions and choices (Davis, Brandstätter, & Stocker-Kreichgauer, 1982), in the sense that these choices are influenced by factors beyond rational thinking.

Examining group psychology in the context of military service may shed some light on the psychological state of mind of soldiers, for whom the main (and sometimes only) reference group is their unit, led by their senior commanders and officers. Being exposed to the frequent fear of death or physical harm intensifies the group cohesion of the unit, forcing its members to give up much of their individual judgment and self-centred individual interests in order to improve their chances of survival, with groupthink and groupshift phenomena facilitating strong resistance to any diversion from the group’s norms and cohesion, therefore functioning as survival mechanisms.

### **Individual Psychology in Social Context**

Parallel to the research conducted on group psychology, another research tradition has developed, focusing on the behaviour of individuals in social situations. The starting point for this literature is the work conducted by Norman Triplett (1898), who was the first to conclude from empirical evidence that “the bodily presence of another contestant participating simultaneously in the race serves to liberate latent energy not ordinarily available” (Triplett, 1898, p. 533). In other words, the mere presence of another person is enough to enhance performance and influence the behaviour of an individual. This notion was later developed into *social comparison theory* (Festinger, 1954; Suls & Wheeler, 2000; Suls & Wills, 1991), which suggests that not only are we driven and motivated to action by

the presence of other human beings, but also that we evaluate ourselves, our actions and performance in comparison to our peers. This finding initiated a wide range of both experimental research and conceptual work on human tendencies regarding moral choices and decision-making. Of the phenomena identified by this literature, the most relevant to this paper's focus are those of *compliance to peer pressure* and *conforming to authority*.

**Compliance to peer pressure.** The effectiveness of peer pressure was demonstrated in the classic line-judgment experiment, conducted by Solomon Asch (1955; 1956; 1961), who showed how people who experience peer pressure conform to opinions which are utterly wrong (in this case, judging that a line is equal in length to another line, although it was unquestionably different in length, just because they experienced peer pressure), even without making a direct attempt to convince them. These findings were explained either by the individual's desire to be accepted by the group or by rationalizing that a majority of people holding an opinion are probably more accurate in their individual judgments (Wood, 2000). Whatever way one may choose to explain the findings, it is obvious that peer pressure is an extremely powerful normative tool in disciplining members of a group and preventing deviation from group standards.

The impact of peer pressure received much attention in studies of youth and adolescent behaviour (See for example: Bauman & Ennett, 1996; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; Clasen & Brown, 1985; Crockett, Raffaelli, & Shen, 2006; Nahom et al., 2001). The findings indicate that susceptibility to peer pressure depends both on one's psychological and material wellbeing, as well as on social status. Thus, women are more likely to conform to peer pressure than men, adolescents more than adults, people with low self-esteem more than people with high self-esteem and, most importantly in this study, members of homogenous groups more than members of groups which accommodate a plurality of opinions.

**Conforming to authority.** The rise of totalitarian regimes throughout Europe, during the first four decades of the 20th century, raised some critical questions regarding human nature and socialisation processes, that is, the processes people undergo that bind them to their society and culture (Ross, 1919). Specifically, it generated a discussion as to why a person may so easily give up his or her freedom in order to become an accepted member of a group, and what allows people to act as brutally as they did against other human beings during the two World Wars. Three approaches were developed in an attempt to answer these questions.

***Fear of freedom.*** The first approach to answer this question was suggested by Fromm (1941, 1942). Fromm tried to understand how and why “millions in Germany were as eager to surrender their freedom as their fathers were to fight for it” (Fromm, 1942, p. 2). Although in his essay he specifically referred to Germany as an overwhelming example of the phenomenon he called *fear of freedom* (or *escape from freedom*), he considered that both Fascist and anti-Fascist regimes (Such as Marxist-Leninist communism) may equally manifest it. One of Fromm’s claims is that conformity is one way through which an individual can overcome his or her existential anxiety about death<sup>1</sup>. By accepting and conforming to group pressure, the individual accepts social norms and beliefs, unconsciously leading actors to assume consonance between individual and group culture.

***Obedience.*** A different, and more empirically-based explanation, was suggested by Milgram (Milgram, 1963; Milgram & Van den Haag, 1978) with the concept of *obedience*, namely the human tendency to follow an order from a person in authority (Milgram, 1965). Obedience is a behavioural phenomenon that may make an individual follow directions to

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike individual death anxiety, which one may experience while thinking of his or her own expected death (For a wider definition see: Lehto & Stein, 2009), existential death anxiety is a much wider anxiety that deals with the inevitable death that every human being will face at some point, which projects on a wider scope of questions regarding the meaning of life, determinism etc. (Yalom, 2008).

harm another person even when he or she is reluctant to do so. Milgram argues that obedience occurs because the authority figure's orders override potential reservations of the individual to those orders. Two possible explanations were suggested for obedience. The first, by Milgram himself (Milgram & Van den Haag, 1978), arguing that by obeying an authoritative person, one abdicates personal responsibility to those in charge. A second explanation, suggested by Mixon (1972), was that we tend to trust decisions made by people with authority. Although criticized for questionable ethics (Baumrind, 1964), Milgram's concept of obedience was supported by later experimental researchers (Hofling, Brozman, Dalrymple, Graves, & Pierce, 1966; Zimbardo, 1974).

***Authoritarian personality.*** The concept of the *authoritarian personality* presented by Adorno (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) also helps explain obedience. A person with an authoritarian personality is typically hostile to those who are situated lower on the social hierarchy while simultaneously being obedient to those holding a higher social status. Moreover, individuals characterized by authoritarian personalities tend to be rigid in their opinions and beliefs and adhere to traditional and mainstream values. Unlike Fromm's fear of freedom or Milgram's obedience concepts, which they argued to be innate in human nature, (that is, which all human beings share), Adorno suggested that a person's tendency to adhere to authority is typically a result of a very strict upbringing with a harsh parenting style. A later sociological explanation suggested that the authoritarian personality can be negatively correlated with the number of social roles that an individual has mastered (Stewart & Hoult, 1959). Thus, an authoritarian personality is not an immanent human quality, but rather an acquired one, and can be explained either by psychological or sociological circumstances.

Group comparison, peer pressure and conformity are all psychological factors underlying some of the most horrific atrocities that people have inflicted, and keep



inflicting, on other people (Arendt, 1963; Loyle, 2012; Staub, 1989; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003; Waller, 2007). Undoubtedly, being a member of a military unit intensifies all of these phenomena, making it quite unlikely for a soldier to draw any conclusions, regarding his military unit's (or country's) actions, that contradict the normative notions of his peers and superior commanders, and making it even less likely to follow them by actively refusing to participate in action.

Following this review of psychological phenomena in a group context, which emphasizes the difficulty to think and act against one's group norms, the next section will present the psychological implications of being a group member in a context of violent conflict, especially those in which the in-group is involved with one or more out-groups.

### **Influences of Intergroup Conflict**

#### **Roots of Intergroup Tension**

Similarly to the phenomenon of *social comparison*, which suggests that the mere presence of another person influences one's perceptions and behaviour, it seems that the existence of an out-group influences the perceptions and behaviours of the in-group's members for the worse (Messick & Mackie, 1989), by increasing in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Three theoretical frameworks offer different perspectives on the sources of intergroup conflicts and the reasons for intergroup hostility and in-group adherence: *realist group conflict theory*, *social identity theory* and *integrated threat theory*.

**Realist Group Conflict Theory.** This approach suggests that intergroup competition over scarce resources triggers intergroup hostility (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). The interesting thing is that the definition of group identity doesn't have to be heavily loaded with history, kinship or shared fate. In a famous series of experiments conducted by Sherif (1966), a group of boys were divided into groups, based on physical similarities. The the

boys spent some time participating in activities which aimed at developing group norms and cohesion through completing tasks, which required intra-group cooperation, such as pitching tents. Following these activities, Sherif found increase in the boys' favouritism of their in-group members over the out-group ones. These findings demonstrate that group categorization is relatively easy to create and that individuals do not require great effort to develop in-group favouritism and out-group biases, suggesting that there is a human preference to be an acknowledged member of a group. The implications of these studies suggest that a hundred years of bloodshed and conflict between two national groups with a long heritage (such as the one between the Jews and the Palestinians) exceeds these minimal conditions for developing in-group and out-group biases.

**Social identity theory.** A second explanation for intergroup bias and hostility is suggested by *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), according to which people identify with groups not so much in order to preserve their material interests, but rather in order to improve their self-perception and self-worth, for which becoming a member of a desired group is a very effective means. The level of reciprocal commitment that group members feel to each other determines the extent to which the group values influence its members' perceptions, emotions and behaviours (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Once a person is a group member, he or she will do everything they can in order to improve the social status (that is, the position of the in-group in the overall social hierarchical structure) of their in-group and diminish that of the other out-groups.

**Integrated threat theory.** A third theory explaining intergroup hostility is the *integrated threat theory* (Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Stephan & Renfro, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2000), suggesting that there are four main threats that group members may experience: (a) realistic threat (competition over resources); (b) symbolic threat (different and competing sets of moral values, beliefs and attitudes); (c) intergroup anxiety (anxiety

experienced or expected to be experienced in the presence of an out-group member); and (d) negative stereotypes. Empirical findings suggest that people's group identity strengthens when the in-group's status is unstable or at risk (Ellemers et al., 2002). In other words, threat to the in-group is perceived as a threat to the individuals comprising it and as a means of coping with this threat, the group's cohesiveness strengthens and the loyalty of its members increases.

### **Intensifying Consequences of Intergroup Tension**

The most visible and predominant outcome of intergroup tension are in-group and out-group biases, that is, influences of group membership on our attributions and explanations of social situations. Development of In-group and out-group biases often may intentionally lead to increase group cohesion and the group-members sense of security in each other (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). This misperception leads to *in-group favouritism*, making individuals prefer their in-group members (Sherif, 1966) and at the same time, generates *out-group prejudices* and social expectations (Allport, 1954; Stephan & Stephan, 1996). A combination of in-group favouritism and out-group prejudice is manifested in the *ultimate attribution error* (Pettigrew, 1979), which stems from Fritz Heider's *attribution theory* (Heider, 1958). Ultimate attribution error results from our underlying assumption that the in-group is good by nature, while the out-group is immanently evil. Therefore, every aggressive or hostile action on the part of the out-group will be attributed to its perceived evil nature while every concession or gesture on its part will be attributed to circumstantial reasons (typically demonstrated by utterances such as "they had no choice or it serves some hidden motives") whereas every aggressive or hostile act of the in-group is attributed to circumstances ("we had no choice or they made us do that") and every peaceful gesture of the in-group will be attributed to its righteous essence. The ultimate attribution error has two important implications. First, it allows people to make sense of the chaotic reality of a

conflict, which can be reassuring as it gives meaning to hardship and pain caused by the conflict.

Second, and more importantly, it enables people to protect their views from contradictory information. This is important as consistency between attitudes and actions has been found to be one of the main factors in individuals' self-esteem (Festinger, 1962; Greenwald & Ronis, 1978). Thus, reasoning related to the *ultimate attribution error* can prevent situations of incompatibility between one's attitudes and the reality they are exposed to. However, in case that such incompatibility does occur, *cognitive dissonance theory* (Festinger, 1962) suggests that one's actions have priority on their attitudes and so mandatory conscription would most often shape the attitudes of conscripts in a way that would justify and legitimize military conduct to avoid *cognitive dissonance* from taking place even if, essentially, they contradict an individual's moral world view. Thus, one would prefer to justify his or her immoral conduct rather than to stop it (Tsang, 2002; Mercier, 2011).

### **Barriers to Conflict Resolution**

Following the general theorizing of the social and psychological implications of intergroup conflict, a vast literature mapped these implications beyond the general ones mentioned above. In their review of the literature on socio-psychological barriers to conflict resolution, Bar-Tal and Halperin (2011) group them into four main barriers for conflict resolution: *contents of social beliefs, intergroup mistrust, cognitive and motivational processes* and *affective and emotional factors*. These barriers are usually presented with the unit of analysis being the society or the identity group. However, understanding these barriers entails much value for understanding the challenges which conscientious objectors may face and therefore, the discussion of the barriers will try to illuminate the perspective of a single person, rather than a social group as a whole.

**Contents of social beliefs.** The first barrier that Bar-Tal and Halperin mention is the *Contents of Social Beliefs*, which are defined as “the society’s members shared cognitions on topics and issues that are of special concern to society and contribute to its unique characteristics” (Bar-Tal, 2000b, p. 353). Common social beliefs include zero-sum perception of the conflict (or fixed pie biases), self-moral glorification, illegitimacy of the adversary’s identity, self-perception of victimhood and many more. The definition of social beliefs implies that societies create not only physical and communal interdependence but also cognitive dependence. Thus, societies engaged in conflict are able to discipline their members and to set standardized cognitive ways of thinking and rationalizing. The immediate implication of the concept of social beliefs is that critical thinking of one group’s narrative of the conflict is very unlikely to develop or spread, as it is illegitimate and inconceivable both cognitively and morally. Hence, group members’ opinions and positions will most probably remain consistent with their in-group’s ones. Moreover, the content of rigid social beliefs make it very hard for group members to even imagine an alternative reality and this often impedes participation in peace negotiations (Kelman, 1987). In other words, not only would one refrain from any critical thinking on his or her in-group’s values and conduct, but even in the case where doubts start to take place, it is very unlikely that they will be developed into an action plan based on these doubts.

An interesting follow-up on rigid social beliefs, in a context of the resistance of beliefs and perceptions to change, is used by Bar-Tal (2013) in the concept of *Freezing*. In its original meaning, presented by Kruglanski and Webster (1996), freezing refers to the human need for closure, that is, a sense of definite information or knowledge of a certain issue. In an adaptation of this concept to a conflict situation, Bar-Tal (2013) suggests that in freezing, the individual “inhibits presentation of new information that can contribute to the facilitation of the development of the peace process. That is, individuals are not interested

even in exposure to alternative information which might contradict their societal beliefs about the conflict” (p. 289). Thus, Bar-Tal argues that people don’t tend to change their societal beliefs following an exposure to contradictory information, but often choose to avoid being exposed to it altogether.

**Intergroup mistrust.** The second barrier to conflict resolution is *intergroup mistrust* (Kelman, 2005; Kydd, 2005). Based on a long history of hostility and violence, none of the conflicting parties has any confidence in the other party as a trustworthy partner for peace negotiations, leaving both of the parties trapped in a negative cycle of hostility and mutual harm attempts. Intergroup mistrust also has a potentially discouraging effect on individuals who look critically on their own leadership’s policies, in the sense that even if they were to pursue an act of disobedience, it would most probably not be met with a receptive appreciation by members of the out-group, leaving these individuals isolated between a rock and a hard place.

**Cognitive and motivational processes.** The third barrier is *cognitive and motivational processes*, which “impede mutually beneficial exchanges of concessions and render seemingly tractable conflicts refractory to negotiated resolution” (Ross & Ward, 1995, p. 295). This barrier refers mostly to cognitive biases such as *selective information processing*, which is processing information that fits existing beliefs and assumptions and neglects contradictory information (Bar-Tal, 2000), ultimate attribution errors, discussed above, among others. Cognitive and motivational processes lead individuals to a biased perception of their in-group’s and out-group’s intentions, which is usually a strong factor in conformity to the in-group’s beliefs and narrative regarding the conflict.

**Affective and emotional factors.** The fourth barrier, reviewed by Bar-Tal and Halperin, focuses on the *affective and emotional factors* (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). Among them it is important to mention the presence of negative emotions, such as hatred

and fear, towards members of the out-group and the absence of positive emotions, such as compassion and empathy (Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011). Above all, in the emotional aspect, Bar-Tal (2001) claims that in times of conflict, fear overrides hope in its impact on the public's collective emotional orientation, as the main emotional symptom of conflicts.

All of these barriers are integrated into a *culture of conflict*, which is defined as “society's specific norms, practices, and institutions associated with conflict” (Ross, 1993, p. 21). The culture of conflict is therefore an integration of cognitive, emotional, behavioural and identity components, which establishes a comprehensive support system in conflict situations, but at the same time functions as the preserver and intensifier of the conflict.

The influence of a culture of conflict on a soldier is overwhelming. Tasked with the responsibility to protect his in-group's safety, he is admired and glorified. However, this heavy burden of social expectations and responsibility, together with a strongly internalized culture of conflict within the military, makes it extremely difficult for a soldier to critically re-examine his and his unit's actions, let alone act upon any possible critical insights he may have.

### **Militarized Masculinities**

When considering the barriers to resistance within a military framework, the role of masculinity formation is crucial for understanding how the act of objection relates to the self-perception of male soldiers. Three key terms are central in this regard: *gender*, *masculinity* and *militarized masculinity*. The American Psychological Association (Practice Guidelines for LGB Clients, 2012) defines *gender* as the “attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex” (p. 11).

Following this, *masculinity* refers to a set of gender-related features, personal traits and behaviours that are expected of males in a given social context (Franklin, 1984).

Attempts to define masculinity suffer from conceptual incoherence (Connell, 2005). One of the reasons for the difficulty of defining masculinity as a stand-alone concept is that it is socially perceived only when opposed, in a gender-related context, to *femininity* (Connell, 2005). Thus, masculinity is often regarded as lack of femininity, and vice versa, although, in principle, some men may lack some masculine traits yet not be considered feminine.

*Militarized masculinity* is a specific kind of masculinity connected to the self-perception of men whose sense of identity “is deeply tied to military prowess and adventure” (Williams, 1994, p. 415). Most commonly, militarized masculinity is shared by soldiers and ex-soldiers who consider their military service to be a profound and shaping experience on their manliness.

The structuring of masculinity is strongly related to the processes accompanying male socialization in different cultural contexts (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978; Buchbinder, 2012; Connell, 2001, 2005; Franklin, 1984; Hearn & Morgan, 2015). Hence, masculinity is not an inherent biological trait possessed solely by men, but rather a set of attributes of typical desirable male behaviours, which can be acquired, to some extent, by women as well. Different historical eras, as well as different geographical and cultural contexts, held different images of masculinity (Franklin, 1984). Connell (2001) argues that “masculinities do not exist prior to social behaviour, either as bodily states or fixed personalities. Rather, masculinities come into existence as people act. They are accomplished in everyday conduct or organizational life, as patterns of social practice” (p. 18). The notion that masculinity is a social construct receives further support from Buchbinder (2012), who argues that masculine behaviour is a concept which is socially constructed, beyond the biological and physical aspects of the male body. Furthermore, society is not only capable of constructing masculinity but also of altering it in response to changes in social reality and circumstances (Connell, 2001, 2012). In fact, the formation of masculinity is adaptive to the extent that



multiple masculinities may exist simultaneously across political, social and cultural contexts. An example given by Connell (2001), which is relevant to the case of militarized masculinity, is that of the social perception of violence. In cultures which are engaged in violent conflicts, masculinity is often closely associated with soldiering and emphasizes heroic acts in combat as masculine traits. However, cultures that reject violence tend to object to soldiering and produce more peaceful images of masculinity.

In a literature review on the roots of military masculinity from historical and anthropological perspectives, Marcia Kovitz (in: Higate, 2003) argues that the notion of an *innate male aggressiveness* (that is, that men are naturally aggressive regardless of their socialization process) is merely a myth and that in fact, it is one of many means and practices of the state and society (including persuasion, material incentives, threats, and ideological indoctrination), which are aimed at preparing young men to engage in combat. To support this argument, Kovitz describes the long distance that people are willing to go in order to avoid combat, including imprisonment, self-mutilation, pretending to be physically or mentally ill, going AWOL and even committing suicide. However, Kovitz admits that these actions of objection are conducted by relatively few individuals, suggesting that the masses are normally quite receptive to these socialization mechanisms to a large extent, and that even those who try to resist them do so for fear of being hurt or killed in action rather than because they resent aggression as such.

In contrast to the notion that masculine aggressiveness is entirely a social construct aimed at creating enough combatants for a society's needs, Rachel Woodward (in: Higate, 2003) argues that cultural and media products such as books, magazines or TV drama series which celebrate the cultural stereotype of the masculine soldier appeal to mostly young men, rather than being imposed on them. In other words, there is a receptive climate among young men to adopt a militarized masculine identity.

The question whether masculinity is a social construct or an innate male tendency for aggression entails some philosophical and theoretical difficulties, as pointed out by Coleman (in: Hearn & Morgan, 2015). However, it is widely accepted among scholars that masculinity is deliberately internalized from a very young age, through to adulthood, by the military and state.

Woodward (in: Higate, 2003) defines masculine military identity<sup>2</sup> as follows:

An array of gendered cultural attributes informing the practice of military life ...

[including] pride in physical prowess, particularly the ability to withstand physical hardship, aggressive heterosexuality and homophobia, combined with a celebration of homosociability within the team; the ability to deploy controlled physical aggression, and a commitment to the completion of assigned tasks with minimal complaints (p. 44).

Woodward's definition contains two types of traits. The first are characteristics of endurance, such as physical prowess and commitment to complete assigned tasks, which do not necessarily draw rigid or impenetrable in-group boundaries as such, nor do they necessarily exclude or discriminate any out-group members or attributes.

The second type of traits, however, is not only affiliated with patriarchal and misogynist perceptions of inter-gender relations (e.g. and homophobia), but also presents some threatening implications for those who may betray the team and desert it, in terms of what happens to their masculinity, both in their eyes and those of the in-group. Becoming *the other* (by, for instance, refusing to go into battle), as this part of Woodward's definition

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<sup>2</sup> Woodward mentions that in higher resolution studies there are more specific traits of military masculinity in different military units. Thus, some traits will be emphasized by pilots while other will be more relevant to infantry soldiers. The definition presented here includes the main traits that are common for soldiers from all types of military units.

regards it, means losing physical prowess and endurance, and aggressive heterosexual traits, and gaining undesirable homosexual (and feminine) attributes.

Masculinity in the modern era is strongly allied with militant ideologies, aggressive tendencies and resistance to diversity, which may partially explain the greater willingness of men to go to war than that of women (Nagel, 1998). For example, Lois Bibbings (2003) describes how prior to the First World War in the UK, “soldiering soon came to be represented as the only way to be truly male” (p. 337). Various traditions and myths were recruited for this purpose, including the Arthurian tradition of chivalry and patriotic adventures stories of the British Empire, in which the military men were portrayed as knights or romantic heroes<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, men who would not enlist – and especially those who did not enlist for conscientious reasons – were despised and rejected by society on the grounds of their not being willing to sacrifice for the common good. Merely 0.33% (16,500 out of almost 5 million) of British soldiers in World War I claimed conscientious objection in front of military tribunals (Bibbings, 2003). These men, popularly known as “No Courage Corps” (p. 342), were mocked and rejected by the general public.

Representations of COs in the media described them as whining, morally impaired, unmanly and emasculated with the suggestion of being sexually inversed. Obviously, the effeminate public image of COs did not pass unnoticed by the COs themselves. One such response is described by Epp (1999), where World War II COs were growing moustaches and adopting other manly and soldier-like manners of behaviour.

Despite the difference between soldiers’ and COs’ masculine images that the state and mass media promote, there is very little empirical research comparing these two groups. One study found some interesting differences between those two groups, both in their sets of

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<sup>3</sup> To this day, the male members of the royal family in the UK all enlist in the military to demonstrate their contribution to their country.

moral values, as well as in their perceptions of gender roles in general and masculinity specifically. In a comparison between a group of officer trainees, a group of COs, and a group of women conducted in Finland (Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Björkqvist, & Lundman, 1988), the three groups were asked about their attitude toward aggression and toward sex roles. The researchers found that the officer trainees showed the highest approval of aggression, the COs the lowest approval and the group of women were positioned in between with a tendency toward the officer trainees. Concerning sex roles, the officer trainees often chose masculine sex roles, while the COs chose androgynous role, that is, no specification of preference of sex role. These findings support the notion presented above, according to which militarized masculinity - the kind of masculinity which is more likely to be common among the officer trainees - is connected with approval of aggression, although the causal direction has not been hypothesized nor established in this research.

### **Militarized Masculinity in Israel**

The Israeli case presents an even more heavily loaded concept of militarized masculinity. In the eyes of the Zionist movement, one of the side effects of lacking sovereignty was the attribution of effeminate traits to the Jewish people, which, during 2,000 years of exile, focused mainly on surviving and maintaining its faith and religious practices. Thus, fulfilling the Jewish national identity by establishing a Jewish state involved developing a *muscle Jewry*, in the words of Zionist leaders Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau (Caplan in: Higate, 2003), namely healthy in body and spirit, brave and above all – honoured by the non-Jews. This notion, which gained tremendous support among Jews following the Holocaust, loaded the Jewish soldiers in the Israeli military not only with the responsibility for winning wars and protecting borders, but also with becoming a manifestation of the *new Jew*, which is the fundamental opposite of the effeminate Jew, which was the way Europeans portrayed the Jewish male up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This historic role (in the eyes of the Zionist movement and the Israeli ethos) of the Jewish soldier greatly contributes, together with mandatory conscription in Israel, to the view of military service as a widely accepted *rite of passage* for males (less so for females, although they are also conscripted) from childhood to adulthood in Jewish Israeli society (Klein in: Higate, 2003). Furthermore, this rite of passage not only allows boys to become men, according to the society's standards, but also enables society to constantly reconstruct these standards, as they may change and develop with time (Ben-Ari in: Ben-Ari, Rosenhek, & Maman, 2001). Thus, the military fuels the Israeli-Jewish masculine image, which in turn promotes patriotic fervour and martial sentiments among adolescents, as they mature into adulthood, fostered by their military service.

Some very interesting insights of militarized masculinity in Israel come from the female perspective<sup>4</sup>. One of the few sources exploring this perspective (Sasson-Levy, Levy, & Lomsky-Feder, 2011) investigates a collection of testimonies of female ex-combatants, who served in the OPT, titled *Women Breaking the Silence* (WBS)<sup>5</sup>. In contrast to the characterization of the Jewish Israeli soldier by “emotional control, conquering of fear and performance” (Ben-Ari and Dardashti in: Ben-Ari, Rosenhek, & Maman, 2001, p. 249), female ex-combatants, refer to the men in their unit as “children who play soldiers without understanding the consequences of their actions” and as being “childish, unsophisticated, irrational and immature” (Sasson-Levy et al., 2011, p. 751). While it is possible to claim that these statements come from women who are trying to clear their own conscience, following their actions as soldiers in the OPT, by putting the blame for military misconduct on the

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<sup>4</sup> While there is very little reference in the literature to women COs, some research on women ex-combatants did take place in Israel, probably due to the fact that it is the only country where conscription is mandatory for women.

<sup>5</sup> This collection was assembled by the Israeli NGO, *Breaking the Silence*, that has been documenting ex-combatants' testimonies about their actions conducted during their military service in OPT starting from the second Intifada (Palestinian uprising), which began in 2000.

shoulders of their male peers, they do portray an image of masculinity which contradicts the ethos of the (male) soldier, described by Woodward and by Ben-Ari. Two explanations are offered in order to settle this contradiction between the masculine ethos and actual masculine behaviour, in the eyes of female ex-combatants (Sasson-Levy et al., 2011). The first is that in fact the masculine trait of emotional control is an empty shell, and is preserved mostly for reasons of image and maintaining gender power relations between the so-called rational men and emotional women.

The second explanation focuses on the function that this description of the male combatants has for the testifying women. According to this, infantilizing male soldiers' positions their female counterparts in a parental status and in so doing reverses the gender-power relationship, empowering women soldiers as the mature, responsible and rational ones.

In sum, militarized masculinity represents a complex and occasionally self-contradictory set of traits attributed to male soldiers. For the soldiers themselves, however, military service is a key milestone in the process of establishing their manliness - personally and socially. This projects directly onto COs, because with their rejection of military orders and duties, they supposedly exclude themselves from the military social group and the perception of masculinity it entails. Thus, as a way of coping, COs might need to either give up their social masculine image or develop an alternative masculinity, which is neither a dominant nor subordinate type of masculinity.

### **Challenges Presented by State and Social Structures**

Aside from the psychological, normative and cultural factors which make it very difficult for a soldier to object to an order, there are also structural impediments to resistance. *Social structure* is a term defined in different ways during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some definitions emphasize institutionalized, hierarchical relations between social groups (based

on ethnicity or gender, for instance), others focus on social norms which predict and dictate reciprocal interactions between individuals, and still others relate to social or state institutions and their indirect influence on social norms and behaviours (Blau, 1975; Crothers, 2013). As this study focuses on the act of an individual disobeying an order given by a representative of the state (that is, a superior officer) the most relevant institutions are hierarchical and normative.

The use of structure in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, commonly relies on Galtung's concept of *structural violence* (Galtung, 1969), seeing it as indirect influence or enactment of power, usually by the state or a social majority group, not necessarily intentionally, but always synonymous with systematic social injustice. Through mechanisms such as *cultural violence* (Galtung, 1990), which provide justifications for direct and structural violence, structures embed themselves emotionally and normatively among people and societies, becoming acceptable means of enforcement and oppression. Indeed, Galtung's notion of structural violence provides insights into Israeli occupation and Jewish-Palestinian relations, as many scholars point out (see, for example: Abu-Nimer, 2004; Halperin, 2011). For instance, the Israeli settlements in the OPT are seen as structural means of depriving Palestinians from their rights on the land.

It seems, however, that in his analysis Galtung underestimates the idea of agency, namely the potential of the individual to rebel against the state structure. Although this act of rebellion will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important to address it here with a more appropriate definition of structure and agency, such as the ones suggested by Giddens (1984), who defines structures as “recursively organized sets of rules and resources, is out of time and space, save in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces, and is marked by an 'absence of the subject'” (p. 25). Unlike Galtung's perception of structure, Giddens (1984) sees structure as recursively implicated in the social systems, which “comprise the

situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space” (p. 25). Human agents, according to Giddens, are not merely subjected to or disconnected from structure. Rather, structure is internal to their activities, thus entailing the potential for both constraining the individual but also enabling human agency.

Thus, Israeli COs’ resistance to structures has a twofold meaning, namely resisting both structural violence inflicted by Israel on the Palestinians, and disciplinary structures within the military system and the wider Israeli society. When structural measures are applied as a constraining mechanism in the service of the state and society to reduce CO, they become a means to compel obedience amongst the citizens, and particularly the military. This section reviews three such structures: military socialization processes, state legislation and court rulings regarding SCOs, and informal social sanctions.

### **Military Socialization**

**Media and school system.** The first structural factor which is meant to ensure soldiers’ conformity is the process of socialization, which they undergo when they join the military. In fact, it can be argued that the recruitment process begins much earlier in life. As a boy grows up and passes through the educational system, he is socialised and educated to mourn national traumas and celebrate national victories in the service of the national ethos (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011). For example, it has been argued that teaching about the Holocaust in Israel is undertaken in order to intensify Jewish nationalist sentiment and support and legitimize the Israeli occupation of the OPT (Resnik, 2003). Similarly, a child brought up in the United States is exposed from a young age to commercials for enlisting in the military such as *be all you can be*, which appeals to the human need for self-actualization (Wolfe & Sisodia, 2003). This constant exposure to persuasion to enlist and serve in the military develops in young men a deep conviction regarding the just causes they



will serve in the military, and create preconditions for obedience and loyalty to the nation and state.

**Basic training.** As the newly-enlisted soldier takes his first steps in the military, he is first removed to a geographically isolated facility. This separation from the civilian population redefines the soldier's reference group, socially and morally, in military terms (Goffman, 1961; Woodward, 2005). In this new location, the new recruit begins his acquaintance with military life through basic training, which is characterized by heavy and continuous stress, leading to both mental and physical attrition (Cigrang, Carbone, Todd, & Fiedler, 1998; Jordaan & Schwellnus, 1994; Pope, Herbert, Kirwan, & Graham, 1999; J. Ross & Woodward, 1994). The continuing stress, combined with the sense of isolation reinforces the trainees' interpersonal bond as they become more and more interdependent in their struggle to survive this military immersion process. Additionally, basic training places much emphasis on discipline as a primary concern of the soldiers (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). Military discipline emphasizes adherence to superior commanders' orders. Its ultimate intention is not only to maintain the military function, but to a much greater extent, to increase the chances that soldiers will obey orders to charge in combat, in the face of great physical danger (Kellett, 1982).

The cohesion of the military unit, on the one hand, and the need to obey orders of superior commanders, on the other, may potentially present soldiers with moral dilemmas in their daily conduct (Akerlof & Kranton, 2005). In the larger frame, however, the military uses these two components of socialization, group conformity and compliance to the in-group and obedience to authority in order to ensure that the soldier's loyalty to his unit and superior officers will overcome any potential doubts regarding the moral content of the orders.

**Total institution.** A useful concept for analysing the military, particularly basic military training, is Goffman's understanding of *total institution* (Goffman, 1961). Military life is typical of this kind of institution:

First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity will be carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole cycle of activities being imposed from above through a system of explicit formal ruling and a body of officials. Finally, the contents of the various enforced activities are brought together as parts of a single over-all rational plan purportedly designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution (p. 314).

Goffman (1961) identifies a basic split in total institutions between *inmates*, who consist of "large class of individuals who live in and who have restricted contact with the world outside the walls" (p. 315), and *staff*, "who often operate on an 8-hour day and are socially integrated into the outside world" (p. 315). Goffman's definition of staff only partially fits the military officers, as they are on duty around the clock, much like their subordinates, but his concept of *inmates* is quite accurate when applied to soldiers.

Goffman's description of the inmate's experience, as he enters the military, is insightful and quite accurate. Upon entrance the newly recruit is stripped of his regular support systems, he is systematically mortified and most importantly, undergoes radical shifts in his values regarding himself and significant others. The inmate's previous family, educational and occupational past become irrelevant and autonomous decision-making is eliminated. The military, as a total institution, in this way deprives the soldier of his individuality and some

of his human dignity, leaving him “with chronic anxiety about breaking the rules and chronic worry about the consequences of breaking them” (Goffman, 1961, p. 319).

### **Legislation and Court Ruling**

The second structural factor relates to the rule of law. Military disobedience is considered to be one of the worst offences a soldier can commit. It destabilizes the hierarchical military structure, which depends on discipline and obedience for its effectiveness in combat (Burk, 1999; Hudson, 1999; Nuciari, 2006). The Red Cross, in its recommendations for the steering committee of human rights of the Council of Europe, states that in regard to obedience to superior orders, “No person shall be punished for refusing to obey an order of his government or of a superior which, if carried out, would constitute a grave breach of the provisions of the Conventions or of the present Protocol” (CDDH, 1973, p. 25). Furthermore, in the case of illegal orders, it is not only the right of the soldier to refuse to follow the order, but also his obligation, and he will be held accountable for following an illegal command (Osiel, 1998). The act of selective conscientious objection (SCO) is thus internationally acknowledged and considered legitimate in principle.

However, the Israeli case demonstrates a different approach of the state to the issue of illegal orders<sup>6</sup>. The SCO discourse was first introduced to the Israeli public following a court martial decision regarding the case of the 1956 Kafr Qasim massacre, conducted by the Israel Border Police (known as Mishmar Hagvul or Magav), a military unit operating under police command. In this massacre, 48 men, women and children of the Palestinian minority in Israel were shot for the violation of a curfew of which they were not aware (Segev, 2000). In 1957-1958, 11 soldiers and officers were put on trial for their participation in the massacre. The most predominant defence claim of the soldiers was that they were

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<sup>6</sup> Similarly to Israel, many other countries do not recognize SCO as such (Clifford, 2011; Robinson, 2009).

merely following orders<sup>7</sup>. This claim was rejected by the martial judge (who was also a Supreme Court judge), Benjamin Halevy, who concluded that the order to kill the villagers was *manifestly unlawful*, a term he defined as follows:

The distinguishing mark of a ‘manifestly unlawful order’ should fly like a black flag above the order given ... Not formal unlawfulness, hidden or half hidden, nor unlawfulness discernible only to the eyes of legal experts ... Unlawfulness appearing on the face of the order itself ... Unlawfulness piercing the eye and revolting the heart, be the eye not blind nor the heart stony and corrupt, that is the measure of ‘manifest unlawfulness’ required to release a soldier from the duty of obedience (Cited in: Orbach, 2013, p. 497).

The soldiers and officers were sentenced to between seven and seventeen years in prison but within less than a year - all of them were pardoned by Israel’s then president, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (Lippman, 2001).

The Kafr Qasim court ruling marked, for the first time in Israel, a soldier’s responsibility for his actions in the battlefield (to say nothing of his contact with the civilian population) and his obligation to evaluate every command he is expected to follow in action.

This court martial ruling could have been considered the principle foundation for the legal legitimacy of CO in Israel. Later rulings of the Supreme Court, however (Elgazi v. The Minister of Defence, 1980; Zonsein v. The Military Advocate General, 2002) prohibited SCO, claiming that it represents a political act of unlawful objection to the authority of the state and military, while at the same time recognizing general conscientious objection

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<sup>7</sup> This claim had somewhat ironic context for the Israeli-Jewish public, as it was used by many Nazi soldiers and officers in the Nuremberg trials and later by Adolph Eichmann in his trial in 1961, following their crimes during World War II (Arendt, 1963; Estlund, 2007).

(GCO) as a potentially genuine manifestation of pacifist conscience<sup>8</sup>. Thus, both the law and court ruling are not sympathetic to conscientious objection to military orders and each SCO faces imprisonment for this act.

Although some COs appeal for exemption on the grounds of being pacifists, the majority of conscientious objectors in Israel explain their objection to military service in terms of what they consider to be Israel's unjust occupation of the OPT<sup>9</sup>. The reasoning of Israeli SCOs is usually not political (in the sense that the Palestinian people is entitled to political self-determination in the form of an independent state), but rather refers to the violation of Palestinians' human rights, which the occupation unavoidably entails. This notion of resisting the occupation also came with an increasing awareness that the degrading implications of the Israeli occupation do not stop at the 1967 lines but gradually influence the whole society from within. Among such influences can be mentioned the increase in criminal rates and post-traumatic stress syndrome among mandatory and reserve duties soldiers, and increased hostility and prejudice towards Palestinians in Israel (Gal, 1990).

### **Informal Sanctions**

In addition to formal punishment, of which the most common is imprisonment, among the social factors it is important to mention informal sanctions and exclusion that are applied to the objector. Although there is a significant lack of academic research on such sanctions in Israel, there are some examples. Some workplaces exercise their disapproval of the SCO, such as Ben-Gurion University, which deducted the imprisonment days' payment from the salary of a professor who refused to participate in his reserve military duty

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<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that GCO is not a right anchored by law, Israel is committed to acknowledge it, as it signed and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966). Thus, the IDF operates a conscience committee, which discusses appeals of both soon-to-be enlisted youth and reserve duty soldiers to be permanently exempt from their military service, for pacifist reasons.

<sup>9</sup> This was the main reason mentioned in numerous petitions signed by different groups of COs since the 1980's – senior high school students, combatants, pilots, officers, special intelligence unit and many more.

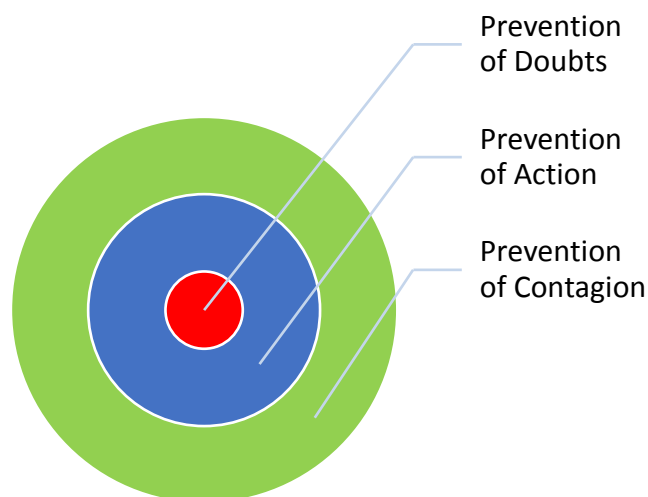
(Nesher, 2011). Other sanctions include alienation from close relatives and expulsion from school (Weiss, 2014). These too, have quite a deterring effect on potential objectors.

### Summary and the Research Gap

Human psychology and behaviour change quite profoundly, and usually for the worse, in the presence of another person, within a group, and in the presence of other groups, which are perceived to compete over scarce resources, be they material, mental or symbolic. These changes include giving up the capability for individual thinking and judgement, tendencies for group-thinking and group-shifting and in-group preference and out-group hostility.

Let us now return to Michael, the soldier. It seems that a multi-layered system is in place to ensure that Michael will not jeopardize the military operation he is part of. This system is illustrated in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. Multi-Layered System for Prevention of Conscientious Objection.*



The first layer of this system prevents possible doubts regarding the rightfulness of his actions as a soldier from entering Michael's conscience. This layer includes the culture of conflict in which he was socialized as he grew up; cognitive and emotional intergroup

prejudice and in-group preferences; avoidance of exposure to any information which may contradict the national narrative and continuous exposure to information that reinforces it; and mistrust of other groups. All of these psychological mechanisms operate in coordination and reduce to a minimum the probability that Michael would ever question the orders he is given by his superior commanders, to say nothing of the larger picture of human rights violations he may be imposing on a civil population as a soldier.

The second layer consists of social enforcement factors which aim to suppress any possible, though unlikely, doubts that Michael, as an individual, still may develop, and reduce the possibility that he explores these doubts and more importantly – act upon them. Michael is a part of a military unit: he is prone to groupthink and to groupshift; he obeys authority and trusts his superior commanders' judgement; he depends on his comrades for his personal safety and well-being and would go to great lengths to remain faithful to them. Additionally, as he was conscripted at quite a young age, both his own sense of masculinity and his self-image are strongly connected to his role as a combat soldier. Turning his back on this role may cancel the militaristic components of his masculinity without offering any alternative and, perhaps even worse, portray him as effeminate in the eyes of his peers.

The third and last layer is there to ensure that even if Michael manages to release himself from the first two layers and object to an order, other soldiers will be deterred from following him, so that his act of CO will not spread in a contagious fashion. Structural sanctions, both formal and informal, which Michael would surely meet, for example imprisonment, would make him an outcast, lead to him suffering the consequences of his objection, and prevent other soldiers from even considering Michael's position as a viable one.

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The operations of the multi-layered mechanism in this chapter lead to a rather deterministic world-view, predicting that soldiers will be obedient and homogenous in their adherence to their in-group, their superior officers and to the national narrative in the light of which they were socialized. However, marginal though they may be, some soldiers do not abide by this CO prevention system and SCO does exist. This presents a research gap, in the form of insufficient theoretical conceptualization regarding explanations for the act of SCO, and social-psychological analyses of the processes leading some soldiers to refuse to take part in specific military action or follow a specific order. What, then, are the social, psychological and political conditions, within which disobedience becomes possible and what is the nature of the processes which SCOs undergo in their journey from their in-group's mainstream to the point where they find themselves exterior, rejecting and rejected by the same in-group?

The next chapter will review the hypothetical components of such a model, and explore initial and partial answers to the second research question, namely, what enables some (although not many) soldiers to stand up against their own military norms and social conventions so that they are able to refuse military action, and what is the nature of the process leading to this refusal?



### Chapter 3: Conceptual Frameworks of Transformation

Something feels different for Michael. The well-intentioned soldier is having doubts. He feels uncomfortable with his actions, with the behaviour of his comrades towards civilians, and even with his own conduct, which reveals a side of him that he was never aware of. This process distances Michael from his friends, both in his military unit and back home, when he is on leave. He feels no one understands him, and even worse, he is ridiculed for what his friends call an unexpected growth of conscience he keeps expressing. He receives critical responses from his fellow soldiers and commanding officers with whom he shares his feelings and thoughts. These responses range from condemnation, such as: “You are nothing but a coward” or “You are supporting our enemies – they would never have felt the same for you”, to attempts to reason with him: “Who is going to replace you in your duties? Your friends in your unit will just have to take these on, in addition to their own daily duties” and “It is better that we, rational and liberal people man the checkpoints and patrols rather than those right-wing extremist nationalists, who would just make the life of the civilian population a living hell”.

Some of these arguments work for a while. Michael accepts them temporarily, mostly out of commitment to his friends. Yet these feelings of discomfort with his actions and wrongdoing keep bothering him until he reaches breaking point, when Michael stands up to his commanding officer, announcing that he can no longer take part in his unit’s assignments, and he asks to be relieved of his duty, or discharged from military service altogether. He is put on trial for disobeying the direct orders of his superior officer, and is sentenced to a month in military jail, at the end of which he receives an opportunity to come to his senses and re-join his unit. Refusal to do so leads, possibly after a series of trials and month-long imprisonments, to discharge from the military for reasons of maladjustment to the institution’s demands.

What is the nature of this process and how is it that only Michael, of all the soldiers in his unit, has experienced it and followed it through? This is the focus of this chapter.

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Given the many challenges and obstacles conscientious objectors face, as the review in Chapter two demonstrates, it is quite obscure what motivates them to object, overcome all the barriers, and suffer the various consequences that objection entails. This chapter offers several possible partial theoretical frameworks, which may explain certain aspects of this decision.

It is important to note that this is an exhaustive list of hypothetical theoretic considerations and explanations of processes of transformation, as potentially, their number could be infinite. Rather, it points to the general directions these theoretical explanations can take, as they view human behaviour as dynamic, rather than static, and relate to transitions that people may undergo toward moderate and peaceful attitudes, perceptions, values and behaviours.

### **Modes of Transformation**

Much of the writing on processes of transformation in conflict focus predominantly on the group level such as ethnic group, organization or society. In one of the earlier works on group dynamics involved in building a world of democracy and peace, Lewin (1943, p. 172) argues that “it is obviously hopeless to change the cultural patterns of millions of people by treating them individually”. Following that, Lewin suggests employing *group work* methods, in order to reach and transform large groups of individuals simultaneously. Later literature relied on this claim by looking at large-scale group transformation processes (See, for example: Gerhardt & Hohenester, 2002; Glover & Dent, 2005). Within this field of group-level transformation, Dayton and Kriesberg (2009) identified several factors for group-level transformation towards peace, such as emergence or change in political

leadership, globalization processes, representation of the enemy in public speech acts, increased impact of the street and the de-militarization of politics during interim post-conflict periods.

While research on group-level transformation sheds light on large-scale processes, it looks at individuals as stable or static in their views and the change is explained only in terms of changes in power relations between them, emerging trends and other factors. This line of research has yet to provide sufficient explanation of what happens on the individual level, which may later lead to larger-scale processes of transformation.

In order to approach the question of what explains transformation on the individual level, this chapter addresses four possible modes of socio-psychological change: Social, moral, emotional and cognitive modes of transformation. Following that, *hope theory* and *optimism* are reviewed as possible explanations for why the COs would follow up on the transformation in their attitudes, beliefs and outlook by action.

Occasionally, this separation between the different modes might seem arbitrary, as there are concepts which combine or integrate them, such as *empathic learning* (Larson-Presswalla, Rose, & Cornett, 1995), which combines the emotional and the cognitive mode or *moral cognition* (Blasi, 1980), which combines the moral and cognitive modes. As will be shown in the emerging integrative transformation model, which this study's findings suggest, the cognitive mode plays a central role in the transformation process, as it interacts with each of the other modes. However, for the purpose of clarity, this chapter discusses each of these modes separately, as each of them is commonly used by a separate sub-discipline or research tradition.

### **Social Transformation Mode**

For the purpose of this discussion, the *social transformation mode* is defined as the transformation of an individual which is triggered or motivated by the social context,

namely the social position in which the individual undergoing the transformation is situated. In this context, Packer (in: Jetten & Hornsey, 2010) defines dissent as “an act that may benefit the collective while entailing costs to the individual actor” (p. 282). According to this, if the individual is willing to suffer the costs, social transformation entails group-level benefits for the individual, which would help explain his or her willingness to sacrifice for conscience (Kollock, 1998; Messick & Brewer, 1983; Packer in: Jetten & Hornsey, 2010).

What, then, are these social motivations and how can the social mode of transformation be conceptualized? In order to explain the collective aspect of the self, Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984) divided the self into three components: *the collective self*, which pursues its in-group’s goals, in order to gain in-group approval; *the public self*, which pursues certain goals in order to gain the appreciation of significant others, who are not necessarily in-group members; and *the private self*, which is self-motivated to pursue goals according to internal standards, such as ambitions and ethics, among others.

The social transformation mode can be explained in several possible ways, based on the terminology of Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984). First, the collective self implies conformist social behaviour, which may only be manifested as dissent in the case of *acquiring a new moral community*. Second, the other two types of self suggest that individuals can have *non-conformity tendencies* in certain situations. Three more theoretic explanations for the social mode of transformation: the private self can explain individuals’ behaviours as either stemming from *innate non-conformity* or taking place through *peer-enabled non-conformity*, and the public self can be seen as *peer-induced non-conformity*.

**Acquiring a new moral community.** Following Opatow’s work on moral exclusion and inclusion (Opatow, 1990; Opatow, Gerson, & Woodside, 2005), one way to explain how transformation processes may be triggered and shaped by group context is to examine the shaping effects groups have over their individual members, based on the respective

values. This approach suggests that although group-members tend to radicalize towards or, at the very least, resist openness to other groups, a group which holds humanistic and diversity-endorsing values may have a parallel positive effect on its members,

A group which is based on shared values can be regarded as a *moral community*. Unlike groups sharing other characteristics, such as ethnic background or geographic area, what brings a moral community together is an agreed-upon set of values and moral considerations (Bernstein & Tutu, 2013). Linked to Benedict Anderson's idea of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006), moral communities can be seen as imagined communities in which the ethical foundation precedes the definition of the group of people gathered around it as a community. In other words, while in imagined communities, shared ethics may be either constructed by a given group of people or a common ground on which a community is formed, a moral community comes together around shared values and they become its binding essence.

Thus, presumably, a process of transformation may occur in the presence of a moral community which is willing to endorse this process and provide its individuals with the protection from outside criticism, which they would very likely face (Packer in: Jetten & Hornsey, 2010).

What are the conditions for acquiring a new moral community? To answer this question, *social identity theory* can be very helpful, by proposing two conditions for such a social transition. Tajfel and Turner (2004) argue that group affiliation primarily improves an individual's self-esteem or at the very least maintains it at a high level. Hence, when an individual identifies a social group which may fit her or his values, before deciding to join they would examine whether that group's social status or assets are higher than those they presently enjoy, and if belonging would increase the individual's self-esteem. For example, members of a moral community which opposes the national narrative of its own society may

suffer not only sanctions and persecutions but also a low social image as traitors or spineless. Therefore, in order to be able to maintain itself as a group and attract new members, this kind of group would need to adopt strategies which could improve its social status. This is why COs' letters in Israel emphasize the unique contribution of their signatories to the IDF and to the security of Israel (see, for example: "Combatants' Letter", 2003).

The second condition for one to acquire a new reference group, according to Tajfel and Turner (2004), is that the target group has penetrable boundaries, which will allow the individual to complete the transition. For example, a moral community formed from people who grew up together in the same youth movement may have its own rituals, codes of conduct and social structure, which are its operating principles. An individual who was not socialized into that youth movement may find it impossible to become a full member of that group, even if its values and social status are in line with his or her own.

In sum, the existence of a socially attractive moral community which would be inclusive and accepting of new members can be a catalyst for transformation processes leading to conscientious objection.

**Non-conformity.** Another way to explain the social mode of transformation suggests that while most people tend to abide by social norms and pursue group affiliation, others do not. *Idiocentric* tendencies are defined by Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clack (1985) as preferences or inclinations towards individualism held by individuals, rather than by cultures. Similarly, they define *allocentric* tendencies as tendencies towards collectivism held by individuals rather than by cultures.

***Innate non-conformist tendencies.*** Often, individualism and collectivism are seen as being shaped by cultural conventions (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Suh, 2002; Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, & Sugimori, 1995). That is,

individuals' preferences regarding positioning themselves on the individualism-collectivism continuum are considered to be strongly dependent on what the wider society and culture defines as appropriate or legitimate. Thus, idiocentric tendencies within a collectivist culture are perceived as abnormal and atypical of this line of causality and are less common. For example, in one piece of research on the clash between idiocentric preferences of individuals and strong collectivist orientation of the wider society, idiocentric individuals showed high scores on scales measuring paranoid, schizoid, narcissistic, borderline and antisocial personality disorders (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği, 2006). In this perspective, and with the costs of going against social and cultural conventions, what could explain turning against one's own society?

The explanation through *innate non-conformity* holds that some individuals have either inborn or learned tendencies or capacities which allow them to overcome group pressure or not experience social sanctions as threatening.

Corazzini and Greiner (2007) reject the notion that conformity is a shared human tendency. However, they do acknowledge that their findings contradict those of other researchers (Allport, 1939; Bernheim, 1994; Goeree & Yariv, 2007), who arrived at contrary conclusions. Thus, instead of attempting to generalize over entire collectives and groups, it is quite safe to assume that within each society, whether collectivist or individualist, there are idiocentric individuals, whose goals are set by their own internal standards (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Yamaguchi et al., 1995). There is still a need for further research, however, on the causes for innate non-conformity, whether inborn or acquired. But how do idiocentric individuals overcome group pressure?

***Peer-enabled non-conformity.*** In the previous chapter, the experiment of Asch, known as the *Asch conformity studies* (Asch, 1955, 1956, 1961) was mentioned as a demonstration of the human tendency to conform. However, while this is the context in

which most of his work is cited, in fact two-thirds of his participants did not conform to misguiding peer group opinions, and maintained independent judgement. Asch's original intention in his research, as Friend, Rafferty and Bramel (1990) claim, was to argue for those participants who chose independence over conformity.

Yet in this study, the proportion of conformist and independent participants still does not provide an explanation of processes of change from conformity to independence. For this, a look at another variation of Asch's experiment may be useful. In post-experiment interviews, when participants who acted in a conforming way were asked the reason for their choice, a common answer was that it was "painful standing alone against the majority" (Asch, 1956, p. 70). Therefore, in a follow-up experiment, Asch introduced a member of the group who broke up the unanimous majority voice. The presence of this dissenting group member, or an ally, was sufficient to reduce the conformity rate by as much as 80% (Asch, 1956). These findings were replicated by other researchers as well (Nemeth & Chiles, 1988). The implication of this finding for our case is that conformity required unanimous obedience. Even without an entire group endorsing non-conformity, often it is sufficient to witness or be aware of another CO in order to pursue a process of transformation towards non-conformity.

The suggested explanation here is that awareness of or contact with even a single CO, not to mention a group, can provide an individual with the confidence not to conform to the majority norms but rather to follow that CO's lead and object.

***Peer-induced non-conformity.*** In some instances, non-conformity can be enabled not only by another individual, based on external motivation, but is actually motivated by the contact with him or her. For example, Griskevicius, Goldstein, Mortensen, Cialdini, and Kenrick (2006) demonstrate how men's motivation to attract a mate brought about non-conforming behaviours on their part in order to make them stand out and be portrayed as



unique among their peers. Thus, romantic prospects, especially ones involving expectations of sex, can provide stronger motivations to dissent than potential social sanctions a man can expect.

Similarly, one can assume, *peer-induced non-conformity* may be triggered by the prospect of approval from significant others such as parents and teachers.

### **Moral Transformation Mode**

The term *moral transformation mode* suggests that individuals' ethics may change over time due to certain circumstances and reasons. Three main explanations are offered for moral transformation. The first is moral psychology, which addresses individuals' ethics through a psychological lens. The second line of explanation is *external influences on morality*, which proposes an explanation for how exposure to certain events, information or conditions causes individuals to review and reconstruct their values and ethical world view.

**Moral psychology.** The field of moral psychology studies how people's values are developed and the consequences for their social and political engagement and wellbeing. Two research fields in moral psychology are discussed here as potentially contributing relevant considerations to the question of what makes people change their moral world views. The first is *moral development theory* and the second is *psychology of highly conscientious people*.

**Moral development theory.** In his work, during the 1970's and 1980's Kohlberg (Kohlberg, 1971; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977) presented his moral development theory, suggesting that human ethics develops through a set of three generic levels, each of which are composed of two stages. In the case of the moral transformation mode, it is especially interesting to look at the transition from level two, which Kohlberg named the conventional level, and level three, which he named the post-conventional, autonomous or principled level.

The conventional level, according to Kohlberg, is characterized in the following way:

The individual perceives the maintenance of the expectations of his family, group, or nation as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. The attitude is not only one of conformity to personal expectations and social order, but of loyalty to it, of actively maintaining, supporting, and justifying the order and identifying with the persons or group involved in it (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 29).

This description expresses an ethical notion of conformity in which the ultimate good is identical to the good of the in-group, in the eyes of the individual.

The post-conventional level, however, is defined as one in which “the individual makes a clear effort to define moral values and principles that have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups of persons holding them and apart from the individual's own identification with the group” (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 29).

Thus, while on the conventional level an individual's ethics are prescribed by the in-group's norms and authority, at the post-conventional level, the individual constructs her or his own set of values and ethical worldview, independently from those of his or her in-group.

Focusing on the two stages of the third level reveals how Kohlberg might look at the act of conscientious objection. Stage five, the first of the two at the third level, is named the social contract legalistic orientation, and does not seem to progress far from level two, in that it proposes that at this stage, one's values are “defined in terms of general individual rights and standards that have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society” (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 29). In other words, societal norms still play a central role in structuring the individual's moral views, but with the addition that he or she is open to

modifications and additions, based on rational considerations of individual rights. According to Kohlberg, this is the stage at which the American government and constitution is positioned (Kohlberg, 1971), and this also probably applies to most western-liberal democracies. However, stage 6, or *the universal ethical-principle orientation* is quite different:

Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles that appeal to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency.

These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity, and equality of the human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 30).

Thus, in the sixth stage, which hardly anyone reaches, according to Kohlberg, one is driven by universal and consistent values, which are neither relative nor dependent on structural circumstances or cultural norms. Kohlberg concludes by stating that “Theoretically, one issue that distinguishes stage 5 from stage 6 is civil disobedience” (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 30). Kohlberg does not provide an extensive explanation for the reason why individuals would move from one stage or level to another, other than that it goes hand in hand with cognitive development, as described by Piaget (1971).

Thus, Kohlberg’s reflection on the *moral transformation mode* would probably assert that CO can be explained by moral development from stage five to stage six and the rarity of COs is explained by the idea that stage six is theoretical in essence and that in fact, very few people can actually live up to its high moral standards, in that they would have to detach themselves from any social influence on their moral views.

Among numerous criticisms which target Kohlberg's *moral development theory*, the one made by Carol Gilligan (1982) is highly relevant to this study. It will be presented later in this chapter in the section on the emotional transformation mode, as its implications directly feed into possible conceptualization of empathy development.

***Highly conscientious people.*** In contrast to Kohlberg's assumption that there is a generic and universal developmental model which identifies stages through which essentially all human beings pass through, another thread of literature assumes that some people are more conscientious than others and engages in research on highly conscientious people (Boyce, Wood, & Brown, 2010; Hornsey, 2005; Packer, Fujita, & Herman, 2013; Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001; Witt, Burke, Barrick, & Mount, 2002). This approach is concerned with people's high conscience as an independent or explanatory variable rather than a dependent one. An important prediction which many of the studies in this field make is that highly conscientious people are more likely than others to be non-conformist, to express criticism of the in-group and to dissent in the face of moral dilemmas (Packer et al., 2013).

**External influences on morality.** Apart from personality traits and innate moral components, some people report that exposure to certain events drove them to review and occasionally reconstruct their moral world view. For example, regarding an on-going philosophical debate on why Jewish survivors of the Holocaust still believe in God, the writer Primo Levi, a Holocaust survivor, declares that "There is Auschwitz, and so there cannot be God" (Levi & Camon, 1990, p. 68). Thus, if religion may be considered as part of one's moral world view, life events can have an effect on individuals' ethics.

Another component which the post-Holocaust philosophic writing contributes is presented by Arendt (1963), in her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. In this work, Arendt shares her impressions of the trial of the Nazi perpetrator, Adolph

Eichmann. A key term Arendt introduces in the book is *the banality of evil*, implying that Nazi perpetrators, no less than the German general public and even Jewish institutions established by the Nazi regime (Judenräte), were not necessarily evil by nature, but that they efficiently promoted the Nazi mass destruction project. One implication of Arendt's notion, which was also widely criticized, suggests that in certain circumstances ordinary people can find themselves in the service of evil.

The notion that ordinary people can conduct atrocities is quite common and was also mentioned in the previous chapter referring to Milgram's experiment, for example (Milgram, 1965; Milgram & Van den Haag, 1978). What does this notion have to do with the moral transformation mode leading to conscientious objection?

One possible explanation of circumstantial moral transformation is that while most people perceive themselves as essentially moral, certain experiences in military service may lead some soldiers to moral introspection and the realization that in their duty in the OPT, they in fact terrorize the civilian population rather than protect their own country, leading them to object to military service. This realization ties in closely with the concept of *human face* or *human subjectivity* of Lévinas (Burggraeve, 1999; Lévinas, 1989; Lévinas, 2003), suggesting that moral transformation is triggered by a combination of someone realizing the meaning of his or her actions and understanding that the objects of those harmful actions are human subjects just as she or he is. That is, external triggering of the moral transformation mode begins when a person can imagine himself in the shoes of those his actions harm or abuse in a manner he cannot justify. This description of this mode has implications for the emotional transformation mode, as will be discussed in the next section.

### **Emotional Transformation Mode**

Hoffman (2008) defines *empathy* as “an emotional state ... in which one feels what the other feels or would normally be expected to feel in his situation” (p. 440). In other

words, empathy is one's emotional capability to put oneself in someone else's shoes. Empathy is linked with other terms which refer to positive attitudes and emotions towards others: compassion, caring, sympathy and non-judgement (Gilbert, 2005).

Intuitively, a key factor in the emotional transformation mode should be development of empathy to the other – the Palestinians, in the present case. The question that a conceptual framework needs to address, then, is what can make an individual who is indifferent to the suffering of others develop empathy towards them? Two considerations could be relevant to answer this question. The first is Carol Gilligan's *ethic of care* (Gilligan, 1977), which, although concerned with morality, can be viewed as explaining development of empathy. The second is based on literature concerned with the psychology of compassion and empathy.

**Ethic of care.** The starting point for this discussion is based on Kohlberg's model of moral development, which was discussed in the previous section. In his experiments based on this model, Kohlberg claimed to have found a significant difference between the sexes as to where they are positioned on levels of moral development (Broughton, 1983; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969). Specifically, his findings suggested that while the majority of adult women demonstrate moral reasoning typical of *conformist* stage three, most adult men used moral reasoning which is identified with *legalistic* stage four – both of these stages belong to the *conventional* level two. However, they are quite different in their characters. In stage three much of the emphasis of what is moral is placed on social approval and good intentions:

Behaviour is what pleases or helps others and is approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority or "natural" behaviour.

Behaviour is frequently judged by intention -- "he means well" becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being "nice" (Kohlberg, 1971, p. 29).

In stage four, on the other hand, the individual sees moral reasoning as one which serves the maintenance of social order, abides authority and observes the rules (Kohlberg, 1971). However partial or immature each of these stages may seem, the fact that they are numbered and that their order has developmental significance implies that Kohlberg's findings suggest that men are more developed than women in their morals or in short, that women are less moral than men.

Naturally, this claim had triggered many critical responses. For example, a later meta-analysis conducted by Lawrence Walker of a large number of studies on sex differences in moral reasoning found that generally there are no significant differences (Walker, 1984). But perhaps the criticism of Kohlberg's model that attracted most attention was Carol Gilligan (Gilligan, 1977, 1982, 1987; Murphy & Gilligan, 1980), Kohlberg's former co-author (Gilligan, Kohlberg, Lerner, & Belenky, 1971). Apart from methodological and other considerations in her criticism, Gilligan stressed that because of the different socialization processes that men and women experience they develop different moral orientations. According to Gilligan, men can be characterized by a justice moral orientation, which emphasizes rights, justice, rules and principles. In contrast, women's moral *care orientation* centres on caring, sensitivity and connectedness to others (Gilligan, 1982). However, Gilligan stresses that these orientations represent different approaches to ethics but that in principle, each of them can be expressed by both men and women.

In addition to this categorization of two different moral voices, Gilligan proposes her own moral development model which characterizes the feminine, care moral orientation. Gilligan's model consists of three main stages of moral reasoning (Gilligan, 1977, 1982). The first is *orientation toward self-interest* or *individual survival*, where the individual is focused on self-interest and survival. The second level is *identification of goodness with self-sacrifice*, in which the need to please others and adoption of societal perspectives

overcomes one's self-preservation interest and becomes the basis for moral reasoning. The third, and final, level focuses *on the dynamics between self and others*, in which a person manages to integrate the need to listen to herself with sensitivity towards others. In an earlier paper, Gilligan (1977) calls this stage the *morality of non-violence*, with an emphasis on caring and empathy as the dominant components of this mature level.

For the purpose of the emotional transformation mode, the most important aspect of Gilligan's model is her focus on the transitions one goes through between each pair of the developmental levels. The first transition, between level one and two, is *from selfishness to responsibility*. This transition involves an increasing awareness of the difference between one's personal needs and wants, and her obligations to others – what she ought to do. The second transition is from *conformity to a new inner judgement* or *from goodness to truth*. In this transition the individual critically questions all those assumptions and social conventions she had taken for granted.

Putting this in the context of the conceptual framework, the *emotional transformation mode*, according to Gilligan's model, suggests that developing empathy for others results from questioning one's own social conventions and moving from an orientation of pleasing the in-group and adhering to its norms, to caring for and sensitivity towards members of an out-group, based on an increasing awareness of the inner voice of conscience.

Interestingly, Gilligan, together with Linn (Linn & Gilligan, 1990), referred to the differences between Kohlberg's model and her own in regard to Israeli SCOs in the first Lebanon war. In that comparison, Kohlberg's model suggests a clear-cut reasoning of fundamental, universal and indisputable values, which SCOs are supposed to grapple with in addressing the dilemma of whether or not to object. Additionally, Linn and Gilligan argue that Gilligan's moral orientation sees complexities, where "there are true moral dilemmas



that have no just solutions” (Linn & Gilligan, 1990, p. 200). Thus, Gilligan’s terminology suggests that SCOs would be able to see different sides and complexities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather than seeing it as one-dimensional and perhaps even simplistic, as Kohlberg might have suggested.

**Psychology of compassion and empathy.** The literature on the psychology of compassion also employs terms such as such as empathy, altruism and prosocial behaviour (Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005). Two main theoretical arguments within the field of the psychology of compassion may shed light on the emotional transformation mode: *attachment theory* and *development of empathy*.

**Attachment theory.** The extensive work of Bowlby (1980, 1988) and of Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970) on attachment has many implications for the study of human development as well as psychopathology. Attachment was first defined by Bowlby as the nature of the child’s tie to his or her mother (Bowlby, 1958). Much of the research on attachment identifies several attachment styles of a child to their main caregiver and the consequences of these styles of attachment to the later functioning of the person in adulthood – their ability to establish romantic relations, and to provide a caring and safe environment for their own children. The three generic attachment styles are *secure*, *avoidant* and *ambivalent*, each one representing a different expectation and reaction to a child’s parting and, more importantly, reunifying with his or her main caregiver (Bowlby, 1980).

One important implication of *attachment theory* suggested by Gilbert (2005) is that a safe and nurturing environment in early childhood promotes the development of compassion and “abilities to attend to others rather than be self-protective” (p. 32) in maturity. This contrasts with a threatening, non-investing environment, which is more likely to inhibit compassionate tendencies and internal abilities of self-soothing. Thus, early experiences of safety, care and interest from the main caregivers facilitate the child’s forming of

psychological structures which promote emotions of caring, empathy and concern for other human beings, their rights and well-being. As for the contrasting, avoidant attachment style, Gillath et al. (2005) argue that “avoidant people, may defensively attempt to detach themselves from the suffering of others, feel superior to others who are distressed, thereby feeling less weak and vulnerable themselves” (p. 128). Therefore, they argue that “care for children in ways that enhance their sense of security ... makes it much more likely that they will be good parents and neighbours and generous citizens of the world in later years” (Gillath et al., 2005, p. 140). This argument contextualizes the famous saying that ‘there are no bad children, only bad parents’ in that the importance of providing a safe and caring environment has implications beyond just the short-term wellbeing of the child, which is important itself. Nurturing parenthood affects the child’s interaction and treatment of her or his environment in long-term and their ability to feel compassion and care for others.

***Development of empathy.*** In addition to early childhood attachment, other scholars suggest that compassion can be acquired by learning (Bierhoff, 2005). Hoffman (2008) has identified five modes through which empathy can be developed: mimicry, conditioning, direct association, verbally mediated association and perspective taking. Of these five modes, the first three are considered to be non-verbal, passive and limited but they give empathy an involuntary dimension through life. That is, given that an individual had acquired empathy capabilities in their childhood through these three modes, involuntary triggering of empathic responses may bypass defence mechanisms such as justification of human rights violations in the name of security needs. Exposure to parents’ empathic expressions or behaviours, rewards children are given for empathic behaviours or abilities to associate one’s own stressful experiences with those of others may provide such preparedness for empathic responses.

Hoffman specifically points out that the natural human tendency for fairness makes people uphold justice and object to people and laws that abuse others (M. L. Hoffman, 2008). However, a person's empathy has better chances of being triggered when those suffering stress are closely associated with them by kinship, friendship or ethnicity. Conversely, empathy to out-group members is likely to be reduced when the out-group is considered threatening. Additionally, people are much more likely to empathize with victims who are present than with those who are absent. That is, personal, first-hand contact with victims strongly contributes to the likelihood of triggering empathy, while hearing about victims' suffering indirectly reduces the probability of a similar effect. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that direct contact with and exposure to Palestinians' experience of Israeli occupation would trigger empathy more effectively than reading human rights reports or watching the news.

An important and relevant concept of Hoffman's model (Hoffman, 1977, 2008) in the emotional transformative mode is empathic overarousal, which he defines as empathic distress which increases with the intensity of victims' distress, reaching a level at which bystanders shift attention to their own distress, leave the victim, or focus elsewhere in order to distance themselves from the image of the victim. This definition of empathic arousal suggests that hyper-exposure to others' suffering may lead to reactions of disengagement, abandonment of the victims and self-centred stress.

In a similar, though not identical, mechanism to *overarousal*, Cameron and Payne (2011) define *collapse of compassion* as a decrease in the degree of compassion as a result of an increase in the number of people in need. In other words, instead of being overwhelmed by the degree of suffering leading to emotional disengagement in the case of overarousal, collapse of compassion indicates that witnessing humans suffer 'thickens one's skin', so to speak, and takes up their threshold of sensitivity to other people's needs.

### **Cognitive Transformation Mode**

The final mode of transformation is cognitive, which is concerned with the way in which processing information and ideas influences an individual's attitudes toward the political status quo and their own position within it. Cognitive barriers which challenge processes of cognitive transformation include in-group preferences and out-group biases, resilience to change in attitudes in the face of new and contradictory information and acceptance of new frames of understanding.

Although several attempts have been made to tie cognitive development with moral development (See, for example: Bandura, 1991; Blasi, 1980; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977), the cognitive transformation mode is presented here separately from the moral mode, as it addresses different barriers to transformation, which were mentioned above. This section deals with several possible considerations for cognitive transformation: learning, cognitive dissonance and contact with the other.

**Learning.** One of the main concepts which the cognitive transformation mode is concerned with is attitude change. Information plays an important role in shaping attitudes. In an exhaustive review of attitude formation and change, Bohnet (2002) suggests that attitudes are influenced not only by simply retrieving information from memory, but rather by what is the subject of that thought. This means that people who are over-occupied with a certain issue tend to develop stronger and firmer attitudes toward it, even if (or rather, also when) the information they have about it is partial or biased. Following this, a change in attitudes is more likely to take place when a person is exposed to new and contradictory information to that which he or she had access to when forming the original attitude. A significant body of research demonstrates that rather than changing attitudes in a manner which would be compatible with new and contradictory information, many people develop resilient-to-change cognitive mechanisms to maintain their original attitudes, for reasons

such as preventing anxiety or sustaining self-esteem. (see, for example: Dweck, 1986; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Pekrun, 1992; Tajfel, 1969). This means for example, that, if I hold a negative attitude toward a certain social group and I am exposed to a group member with contradictory behaviour, I might consider this an exception or suspect he is trying to deceive me but, most importantly, I will hold on to my original attitudes towards his group as much as I can. The question is, therefore, how can learning change attitudes or, better, what is it in learning that makes attitudes change?

**PAST model.** Bohnet and Dickel (2011) define attitude as “an evaluation of an object of thought. Attitude objects comprise anything a person may hold in mind, ranging from the mundane to the abstract, including things, people, groups, and ideas” (p. 392). When speaking of attitude change, Bohnet and Dickel (Bohnet & Dickel, 2011) argue that attitude change is in fact the formation of new attitudes, which replace old ones rather than shaping old attitudes into new ones. However, as attitudes are stored in our memory, old attitudes cannot just be forgotten in the presence of new, and perhaps, contradictory ones. Instead, they are tagged as invalid, according to a model developed by Petty and his colleagues (Petty, Tormala, Briñol, & Jarvis, 2006), called the Past-Attitudes-are-Still-There (PAST) model. The important implication of the PAST model for the cognitive transformation mode is that for a transformation to take place, it is not enough for new information to be acquired. It is not less important for us to tag it as valid and for the old attitude to be tagged as invalid. This, of course, may be very difficult to achieve, as old attitudes tend to be constructed over long periods and be repeatedly validated by in-group members. Moreover, when the attitudes at hand have implications for moral self-conception, such as we are good-in-essence, contradictory information which carries a threat to our self-perception is more likely to be rejected and tagged as invalid rather than be accepted as valid and substituted for the old attitude. In a sense, exposure to new and contradictory

information introduces attitudes competing with the existing ones, when only one can be tagged as valid after a process of consideration. What then, against all odds, can make a new and contradictory attitude replace an old one?

Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982) argue that changes in one's fundamental assumptions about the world "can be strenuous and potentially threatening, particularly when the individual is firmly committed to prior assumptions" (p. 223). Thus, people resist making such changes unless they are dissatisfied with their current concepts and have access to alternative ones which seem potentially better in providing more satisfying explanations. Specifically, Posner et al. (1982) point out that the better the new explanation or concept is in explaining observed reality, the more likely the individual is to ultimately accept the new concept instead of the old one. This implies that the more an alternative explanation is critical of the old one and provides a more consistent understanding of the world, the more likely the individual is to accept it.

***Transformative learning.*** A different model addressing the issue of attitude change was suggested by Mezirow (Mezirow, 1997, 2006). Mezirow defines *transformative learning* as "the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumptions and expectations – to make them more inclusive ... open, reflective and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2006, p. 92). Such frames are better not for normative or ethical reasons but because they are "more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2006, p. 92). Two main elements allow transformative learning: critical self-reflection and participating in open discourse. While the former component seems to be purely personal and requires mostly introspective abilities, the latter suggests that cognitive transformation has a strong social element in which one puts their own assumptions to the test by validating them against those of others.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory suggests that learning involves a set of consecutive steps (Mezirow, 2006, p. 94):

1. Critical reflection on the source, relevance and consequences of our own and other people's assumptions.
2. Instrumental learning<sup>10</sup> - determining that something is true or valid through observation.
3. Communicative learning<sup>11</sup> - arriving at more justified beliefs through informed and continuing discourse.
4. Taking action on our transformed perspective.
5. Seeking validation of our transformative insights through more freely and fully participating in discourse and following through on our decision by acting upon a transformed insight.

This sequence of steps suggested by Mezirow has several important implications for the cognitive transformation mode. First, the ability to reflect upon self-assumptions is crucial, which means that implicit assumptions may be more resilient to transformation and that making them explicit is a first step for transformation. Similarly to Mezirow, Wilson and his colleagues (Wilson, Dunn, Kraft, & Lisle, 1989) argue that introspection and self-exploring the reasons why one develops certain attitudes can effectively modify attitudes. Obviously, this type of transformation requires an initial motivation for authenticity and consistency, both of which cannot be taken for granted for every person. It may be argued that this type of transformation requires preconditions, such as *reflexive personality* (Criswell, 2010; Turner, 1992), for the purpose of identifying potential people who may

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<sup>10</sup> Learning involved in controlling or manipulating the environment, in improving performance or prediction (Habermas, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> Understanding what someone means when they communicate with you – in conversation, or through a book, a poem, an artwork or a dance performance (Habermas, 1984).

have a tendency to undergo a transformation triggered by introspection. This may also explain, in part, why many people do not undergo such transformation, as their assumptions remain implicit for reasons ranging from avoiding the risk of self-doubt to weaker abilities of self-reflection.

Second, instrumental learning manifests an aspect of fact-checking, in which new information is subject to processes of verification and judgement on its accuracy and validity. Third, communicative learning involves a social component of validation and affirmation against other people's assumptions and knowledge.

Fourth, transformation concludes with action. Thus, a decision to object is not sufficient to indicate that a person has undergone a process of transformation: action is required as evidence for this.

Finally, Mezirow argues that as a consequence of transformative learning, individuals may more readily engage in open discourse and perhaps become more open or even susceptible to transformative learning.

**Cognitive dissonance theory.** Cognitive Dissonance, as defined in the previous chapter, occurs when attitudes and behaviours contradict (Festinger, 1962). Since people's most basic ambition is to maintain a positive correlation between their attitudes and behaviours in order to preserve their self-esteem (Greenwald & Ronis, 1978), *cognitive dissonance theory*, supported by empirical evidence (Cummings & Venkatesan, 1976; Elliot & Devine, 1994; Schlicht, 1984; Viswesvaran & Deshpande, 1996), suggests that they will adjust their attitudes to fit their behaviours. In the case of COs, this means that as military service is mandatory, soldiers tend to develop justifications and rationalisations for their conduct in the face of any potential contradiction between their actions and their values.

However, contradictory empirical evidence (Chapanis & Chapanis, 1964), as well as competing theories (see, for example: Bem, 1967; Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1971)



suggest that either people have other central motivations than consistency, or that it is also possible that people would alter their behaviours rather than their attitudes. For example, although military service is mandatory in Israel, service in the OPT might provoke anxiety among some soldiers if they are compelled to confront the civilian population. This strong anxiety can lead them to avoid serving in the OPT. However, as consistency between behaviour and attitudes is predicted by cognitive dissonance theory, the soldiers would support avoiding this confrontation with moral justification, in order to both be perceived as consistent and preserve their self-esteem.

### **Contact with Palestinians**

Although there are exceptions, by and large, Israeli reality segregates Jews from Arabs in residential areas, education systems, commerce and other walks of life (Arar, Beycioglu, & Oplatka, 2016). It is very rare for Jews to interact with Palestinians in daily life on equal terms. This reality has created the need to establish other frameworks in which Jews and Palestinians could meet on equal terms, as much as possible.

Thus, since the mid 1970's, planned dialogue encounters between Jews and Palestinians started to take place. A key factor in dialogue activity is *empathic learning*, which is defined as a process that enables an individual to become sensitive to the feelings and perceptions of another person, if that learning takes place in a safe and structured environment (Cornett, 1993; Larson-Presswalla et al., 1995). Three main approaches to facilitating such dialogue encounters have been developed over four decades of this practice in Israel: *the contact approach*, *the inter-group approach* and *the narrative approach* (Maoz, 2012).

### **The Contact Approach**

In the 1950's Gordon Allport proposed the contact hypothesis, suggesting that a reality of social segregation is a primary reason for developing in-group preferences and

out-group biases (Allport Gordon, 1954, 1960; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Based on this assumption, intergroup planned dialogue encounters between Jews and Palestinians had become a common practice since the mid 1970's (Bekerman, 2009; Maoz, 2011; Salomon, 2004a). The proposed transformative principle of encounters conducted under the premise of the contact hypothesis suggests that contact on equal terms between Jews and Palestinians may enable re-categorization along different lines rather than the national ones (e.g., gender-based categories) and that promoting collaborative and interdependence would result in an overarching identity, which in turn would reduce prejudices and inter-group biases, based on the work of Sherif (Sherif, 1958, 2015) and Amir (1976).

### **The Intergroup Approach**

Over time, encounters conducted under the contact hypothesis started to be increasingly criticized from a post-colonial perspective (Reich & Halabi, 2004). These critiques suggested that because they fail to recognize and acknowledge the imbalance of power between Jews and Palestinians in Israeli society, they end up serving the dominant Jewish group by making it feel good about itself, while discrimination against Palestinians in Israel and the occupation of the OPT remain unchallenged (Hofman & Najar, 1986; Maoz, 2000a, 2000b). Thus, an alternative facilitation approach was developed, based on perspectives suggested by radical and post-colonial writing such as Frantz Fanon (1967) and Paulo Freire (1970). Unlike the contact approach, the new approach, which can be referred to as the confrontational approach (Maoz, 2011) or the intergroup approach, aims at uncovering the hidden social structures in Israel which are possessed by the Jewish dominant social group in order to preserve the imbalance of power and its own superior position, access to resources and privileges (Reich & Halabi, 2004).

## **The Narrative Approach**

The inter-group approach has also been criticized, mainly from a group-facilitation methodological perspective, arguing that it does not provide a safe and fair space for the groups' participants and that it creates a setting in which Jewish participants become defendants, while both their Palestinian counterparts and the group facilitators function as their prosecutors. During the 1980's and 1990's, an extensive and high-profile dialogue programme took place in Germany between second and third generations of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and second and third generations of Nazi perpetrators (Bar-On, 1989, 1995). Dan Bar-On, an Israeli psychologist who facilitated this dialogue project, returned to Israel in the late 1990's and modified the dialogue approach he had developed in Germany into a narrative approach (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004). This narrative approach utilized storytelling methods, principles of collective memory (Salomon, 2004b), as well as trauma therapy techniques (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004). Here, the facilitation methodology aims to overcome participants' defences and cognitive filters by creating human empathy to participants from the other side, based on their own or their family's stories and experiences.

To this day, Israeli-Palestinian dialogue work is very common in Israel, with the different approaches often practised eclectically. Participation in planned dialogue encounters can provide a platform for cognitive transformation, through each of the transformative mechanisms the three approaches suggest.

## **From Decision to Action**

### **Hope and Optimism**

In Mezirow's model of transformative learning described above (Mezirow, 2006), the fourth phase was translating decision into action. However, he does not explain what motivates an individual to follow up his decision with action, especially when this action entails personal costs.

Snyder's hope theory (Snyder, 2000) uses the concept of hope to explain what enables people to follow up goals they set themselves and ultimately act upon them. Hope theory suggests that hope consists of two main components. The first is *agency*, which Snyder defines as "the mental bridging to goals dreamed now and attained in the future" (Snyder, 2000, p. 25). In other words, agency is the self confidence that a person gains in her or his ability to reach desirable results through action, through learning processes of past successful actions.

The second component of hope, according to Snyder and his colleagues, is *pathways thinking*, which is "the perceived capability of imagining ways to reach a given goal, including the formation of subgoals along the way" (Snyder, Sympson, Michael & Cheavens, 2000, p. 102). Pathways thinking is the skill to plan processes effectively in order to attain desired goals.

The combination of agency and pathways thinking presented by Snyder defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency and (b) pathways" (Snyder, 2000, p. 102). This definition is quite counter-intuitive to more traditional definitions of hope, such as the one presented by the online Merriam-Webster dictionary: "to want something to happen or be true and think that it could happen or be true" ("Hope | Definition of Hope by Merriam-Webster," n.d.). This dictionary definition refers only to the agency but lacks the component of pathways thinking.

Clearly, although it deals with the question of how people take action upon a goal they wish to achieve, in regard to the present research, hope theory does not address two main issues. First, it does not address the question of content, namely what makes people establish a certain set of goals, change their goals or set goals that are significantly different and at times contradict previous ones.

Secondly, hope theory may be far more relevant in explaining overcoming institutional challenges presented to conscientious objectors rather than internal-psychological ones. It is a cognitive model that puts much weight on external obstacles blocking one's action to achieve his or her goals, but not so much on the internal struggle they experience, as described in the previous chapter.

A complementary term, which may fill the gap of the internal-psychological aspect, is optimism, as suggested by Carver and Scheier (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010). Their definition of optimistic people is much closer to the dictionary definition of hope. Optimistic people, according to them, are simply "people who expect good things to happen to them" (Carver et al., 2010, p. 879). Although this definition portrays optimists as rather passive individuals, in fact research shows that optimism is closely related to physical health, mental wellbeing, and most importantly – to energetic pro-active orientation (Carver et al., 2010). Thus, people who have positive expectations of the future do not just wait for them to happen, but rather take the initiative to make good things happen. In contrast, pessimistic people who have no expectation of good outcomes also tend to remain passive in a manner that makes their expectation become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **Summary**

Various research traditions suggest partial frameworks for individuals' transformation in their social reference-groups, values, emotions and attitudes.

Social triggers for transformation include acquiring a new moral community, and non-conformity. An alternative moral community is a new social group which would approve of and support the act of objection, based on this community's political stance. Explanations for non-conforming behaviour range from innate non-conformist tendencies individuals may have; peer-enabled non-conformity, in which the presence of another non-

conforming individual enables one to dissent; and peer-induced non-conformity, in which the presence of peers can not only liberate an individual to dissent but actually motivate them to do so.

Moral transformation processes can be explained by either internal psychological factors or by external influences. The literature on moral psychology provides two types of considerations for moral transformation. The first, based on Kohlberg's model of moral development assumes that as a person develops her or his cognitive capacities, their moral reasoning develops in a parallel process. The second is the notion of highly conscientious people, which suggests that some people have increased innate tendencies for moral behaviour. On the external side of moral transformation, events which some people experience make them reinterpret reality and review their values, as they come to see the other as a subject like themselves, rather than an object.

Emotional dimensions of transformation include Carol Gilligan's concept of ethic of care, and principles from other writings on the psychology of compassion and empathy. Ethic of care is a moral orientation which emphasizes interpersonal relations and empathy, in contrast to moral orientation of justice and abstract ethical values. In addition, two potential explanations for emotional transformation come from different psychological models. The first is based on Bowlby's attachment theory, suggesting that a secure attachment style in early childhood is more likely to create compassionate adults. The second is based on Hoffman's development of empathy model, suggesting that first-hand witnessing of victims is more likely to trigger empathy that mediates knowledge on people's suffering. However, if exposure to human suffering exceeds one's capacities to accommodate it, a reverse reaction of empathic overarousal may take place, resulting in disengagement and emotional shut down.

The cognitive transformation mode has three dimensions. Firstly, learning theory through models like PAST (past-attitudes-are-still-there) and transformative learning provides explanations for how new and contradictory information may be considered, and how one's outlook can be re-evaluated as a result. Secondly, Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory suggests that based on our tendency for consistency between attitudes and actions, personal stress can result in objecting to orders, justifying it with moral values, which might be more socially acceptable than stress or fear. Thirdly, the field of planned dialogue encounters, which is widely practised in Israel, suggests different ways in which participants may transform their prejudices, biases, attitudes and understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These ways of transformation reflect the practice methodologies for such encounters - the contact approach, the inter-group approach and the narrative approach.

In addition to the four modes of transformation, the concepts of hope and optimism are found to be useful in explaining what could make soldiers follow up on their internal transformation by taking action and object, in the face of many expected sanctions and penalties they may endure for this.

The next chapter describes the methodology of *qualitative data gathering (QDA)* for conducting the study, the characteristics of the participants and other considerations.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

Michael is undoubtedly going through a rough patch. He has turned his back on his friends in his unit and refused to participate in any activity which involves patrolling, policing or contact with civilians. The question now is how the nature of the process Michael has been experiencing can best be explored. What would be an appropriate methodology to study not only Michael's specific case, but also those of soldiers expressing similar tendencies and behaviours of rejecting their military unit's norms and orders? What type of theory and research methodology will allow me to understand and explain these transformational processes?

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The two previous chapters reviewed relevant literature and concepts concerning the two parts of the research questions of this study: what are the social and psychological mechanisms which makes soldiers' dissent unlikely, what enables some soldiers to overcome these barriers, and how does this transformation process lead them to become conscientious objectors.

This chapter presents the considerations which led the study to employ *qualitative data analysis* (QDA) as the research methodology. It then reviews the specific stages, techniques and choices made during the process of data collection and analysis in this study.

### **Conducting Research in the Social Sciences**

#### **Definitions**

Since much of the discussion in this chapter refers to academic concepts, some of these are defined in this section in order to facilitate the discussion in the following sections. Other concepts may be defined later as they arise.

There are many different definitions of research, each relating to a different school of thought and a different understanding of the field. Research is defined in a minimalist



way as a “systemic and organized effort to investigate a specific problem that needs a solution” (Thamilarasan, 2015, p. 2). This definition does not entail a certain type of research tool, nor does it assume anything regarding the problem at hand. It does, however, stress the importance of a system and organization of the practices in a research methodology such that the research process will be available for reproduction or criticism by others. In contrast, alternative approaches may see the value of social research in giving a voice to silenced or repressed groups, or raising awareness of unjust deep social structures (Chilisa, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

An important aspect of research methodology is *warranted inference*, which, according to 6 and Bellamy (2012), is the research design’s ability to demonstrate how the researcher arrived, from the raw data, at the conclusions about the research population. In fact, they claim, “making warranted inference is the whole point and the only point of doing social research” (6 & Bellamy, 2012, p. 14). 6 and Bellamy refer to three types of possible inferences that social research may aim at. The first type is *descriptive inference*, namely *ontological* questions, such as, *how can we characterise X* or *what do we know about X*, with X being the subject of our research. In the case of the present research, *descriptive inference* will focus on understanding what selective conscientious objection means, and its components and manifestations.

The second type of inference is *explanatory inference*, which goes beyond the descriptive inference in that it attempts not only to characterize X but also to explain its dynamics s (6 & Bellamy, 2012). An explanatory inference in regard to the present study will focus on the reasons and processes leading to the act of conscientious objection by soldiers.

The third type of inference is *interpretive inference*, which aims to detect patterns in, and the significance of, concept and theory for the research population. For instance, an

interpretive inference in this study will identify common preconditions and life events leading to objection, as well as refinement in the demarcation of the type of conscientious objection.

These three types of inference are not mutually exclusive and may complement each other in the formation of the research question. In the present study, while the first part of the research question leads to a descriptive inference, the second question looks for both descriptive and explanatory inferences. Additionally, and although not necessarily required by the research questions, interpretive inferences are made, as the findings of the data are discussed and developed as guidelines for a theory of change.

A key concept in the discussion of research is theory. Maxwell and Chmiel (in: Flick, 2013) define theory as “a conceptual model or understanding of some phenomenon, one that not only describes, but explains, that phenomenon – that clarifies why the phenomenon is the way it is” (p. 21).

When considering the best way to pursue a research question, the most appropriate research approach has to be chosen. 6 and Bellamy (2012) differentiate between research methods and methodology. According to this distinction, research methods are “sets of techniques recognised by most social scientists as being appropriate for the creation, collection, coding, organisation and analysis of data” (6 & Bellamy, 2012, p. 9). Methodology, on the other hand, is “the understanding of how to proceed from the findings of empirical research to make inferences about the truth – or at least the adequacy – of theories” (6 & Bellamy, 2012, p. 1). Understanding the methodology allows the researcher to properly design the study and make deductions from the findings about the possible implications of the research. Unlike *research methods*, *methodology* engages with the process of interpreting findings or explaining them.

Two additional terms require definitions before research paradigms can be explored: *ontology* and *epistemology*. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines ontology as "a particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of things that have existence" ("Ontology | Definition of Empirical by Merriam-Webster," n.d.). That is, ontology refers to the nature of things. According to the same dictionary, epistemology is "the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity" ("Epistemology | Definition of Empirical by Merriam-Webster," n.d.). Epistemology, in this view, refers to the way in which we acquire our knowledge, and any possible distortions or biases which might create a gap between the nature of the subject of our study and what we discover about it through our research. Epistemological questions are commonly addressed through methodological considerations, aiming to identify the best means of research, through which the research questions will receive the best informed and insightful answer with the least distortion. Krauss (2005) summarizes the relation between ontology, epistemology and methodology by arguing that "as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it" (pp. 758-759).

### **Research Approaches in the Social Sciences**

Although many approaches and paradigms have been developed in the social sciences, two main ones inform the chosen methodology in this study: the positivist and constructivist paradigms.

**Positivism.** The first paradigm, *positivism*, follows research traditions in the natural sciences, holding the notion that the studied object or phenomenon is independent of the researcher. That is, it exists in itself and if properly measured or observed, its nature will be revealed regardless of the identity of the researcher, her tendencies or hypotheses.

Historically, research in the natural sciences, such as classical physics, followed the positivist paradigm. Following suggestions made by Mill (1884), this paradigm, which was dominant in the natural sciences, was adopted by social science research. Assuming that both the social and natural sciences share the same goal of the discovery of laws that lead to explanation and prediction, it was asserted that they should employ the same methodologies and means of empirical enquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An important methodological principle in positivist research asserts the researcher remains apart from the experiment to avoid her affecting the results. That is, the instrument of measurement must be separate from the researcher conducting the measurement. Thus, a watch is a suitable instrument to measure and compare response time to different stimuli, while neither the researcher's nor the participant's estimation of response time would be considered valid.

Most commonly, positivist research uses quantitative data collection methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Healy & Perry, 2000; Krauss, 2005), namely data which is coded numerically and analysed through statistical procedures. The main purpose of quantitative analysis is to generalize the findings from the research group to the wider research population. In other words, the purpose of positivist quantitative research is to examine, by statistical means, whether findings regarding the research group (the group of participants in a study) may be generalized to the research population, which is the group in the general population which fits the selection criteria of the study (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). That is, if shown to be statistically significant, a phenomenon found among the research group can be assumed to apply to the wider research population.

Positivist research is structured in the following manner. It develops a hypothesis regarding a certain phenomenon, based on a chosen theory or a model. It then observes and describes this phenomenon systematically using statistical inference and interprets the results in light of the chosen theoretical model (Cacioppo, Semin, & Berntson, 2004).

To this day, positivist and quantitative research dominates scientific research in general and in the social sciences in particular (Healy & Perry, 2000; Ponterotto, 2005). However, some findings may challenge the justification of the dominance of quantitative research, when examining the reproducibility of research findings in psychology, namely the probability of other researchers conducting the same procedure to produce similar findings, which is one of the most basic criteria of the positivist paradigm. In a large scale project (Open Science Collaboration, 2015), which conducted replications of one hundred studies in psychology, both experimental and correlational (that is, those which do not involve manipulation of laboratory conditions), the researchers found that while in the original studies, which were all published in prestigious peer-reviewed journals, ninety-seven percent had statistically significant results, suggesting that their findings can be generalized to the research population, only 36% of the replicated studies had significant results. Based on this low rate of reproducibility of this body of quantitative research, it may be argued that the value of positivist research in the social sciences should not be overestimated.

**Constructivism.** During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, critical approaches have been developed in the social sciences questioning some of the assumptions of the positivist paradigm. The earliest expression of criticism towards the positivist paradigm can be traced back to Kant's work, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, (Kant, 1878), where he stresses that our understanding of the world is mediated, and therefore distorted, by our human senses, perceptions and mental structure which organize our observations in certain ways rather than others. A complementary view was offered by Dilthey (1977), who argued for a differentiation between the goals of the natural and the social sciences. He suggested that while the goal of the natural sciences is to explain the studied phenomenon, the social sciences aim to understand it (Schwandt, 2000).

Unlike positivist ontological assumptions, constructivist ontology does not assume an objective reality (Krauss, 2005). Instead, it assumes that human beings construct realities and therefore there may be as many realities as there are people. But constructivism takes a further epistemological step, suggesting that not only does each subject construct her own reality, but that different observers of that subject's construct of reality will arrive at different understandings of that construct. Or, in the words of Schwandt (1994): "to prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies" (p. 222). It can be argued that while the positivist researcher separates herself from the world she studies, a constructivist researcher will not only perceive herself as participating in the world she studies, but that she also influences it through her study (Healy & Perry, 2000; Krauss, 2005).

Most often, the constructivist paradigm is applied through qualitative research, or *qualitative data analysis* (QDA), namely research which is based on data in the form of words and texts, and occasionally visual forms, but not numbers (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Krauss (2005) argues that qualitative research, in addition to collecting data, creates data which prior to the interaction of the inquirer and the inquired did not exist. This joint creation of data has a potentially transformative power in that the subject of the study undergoes a process of investigation through dialogue with the researcher no less than the researcher herself. Thus, contrary to positivist research which aims at avoiding any possible effect of the researcher on the researched subject, the constructivist approach considers such effect as possible and even immanent to the research process.

Furthermore, the QDA research approaches the studied phenomenon differently from the positivist, quantitative one:

The goal of a qualitative investigation is to understand the complex world of human experience and behaviour from the point-of-view of those involved in the situation

of interest. Therefore, the investigator is expected not to have an a priori, well-delineated conceptualization of the phenomenon; rather, this conceptualization is to emerge from the interaction between participants and investigator (Krauss, 2005, p. 764).

Thus, according to Krauss, a conceptualization of the studied phenomenon is an expected outcome of the research, rather than its starting point. Since this expectation introduces a certain level of uncertainty and unpredictability into the research process, Sidani and Sechrest (1996) recommend flexibility in design, data collection and analysis of the research findings, so that the research participants' perspectives receive the appropriate attention. Thus, the researcher should avoid imposing her assumptions or preconceived ideas on the participants. Moreover, in order to increase transparency and make the researcher's imposition of her own expectations less likely, Creswell (2013) suggests that the researcher record their own biases, feelings and thoughts. These should be self-acknowledged and allow the researcher to "take the point of view of the other" by allowing them to capture what they mean in their own words (Becker, 1996; Krauss, 2005, pp. 764-765). This is achieved through direct conversations, interviews and participation in the lives of the participants or in the researched phenomenon (Krauss, 2005).

**The third paradigm.** In order to fill the void between the positivist and the constructivist paradigms, a third pragmatic paradigm has emerged (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). While the gaps between the two paradigms' ontological and epistemological assumptions and principles cannot be easily bridged, the third paradigm, which is also referred to as the *mixed methods approach*, suggests that "research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16). In other words, any research method should be considered valid as long as it contributes to a better understanding of the studied

phenomenon. Moreover, ontological and epistemological differences should be tested by their implications for the research design. If such differences do not entail a different research design, it is not important to settle them. However, if they do imply that different methods of data gathering should be employed, the researcher should employ both rather than choosing one, as integrating both is bound to result in a deeper understanding.

### **Considerations for Choosing the Methodology for the Current Study**

Based on the above characteristics of and distinctions between the three research paradigms, it seems that the most suitable approach for this study is constructivism. First, as shown in chapters two and three, processes of transformation are undertheorized or only partially theorized in the literature. Thus, this study intends to conceptualize and theorise the process of transformation rather than test an existing theory and hypothesize its implications for the case of COs.

Second, this study focuses on largely subjective processes. That is, the COs' ability to reflect on and articulate their experiences moderates the understanding of the processes of transformation they have undergone. Thus, any conclusions which may be drawn from this study can only refer to the process of transformation for the specific participants in this study rather than aspire to be generalized beyond the research group.

However, as will be demonstrated in the findings chapters, although the study broadly follows the constructivist paradigm, occasionally some quantitative factors will be considered. Pure constructivist research, for example, does not necessarily require a large sample of participants, nor does it attribute importance to the proportion of participants whose narratives correspond with a certain theme in the analysis. As will be presented in the findings chapter, there is some reference to certain participants who objected during their mandatory service period (four participants) versus their reserve duty service (nineteen). The numbers in this example do not stand alone as indicators of a certain finding, but are



used to support other findings which refer to differences between the structural barriers for conscientious objection imposed by the military, as well as changes in agency and transformative potential during each of these periods.

### **The Procedure of QDA Research**

Although, as mentioned above, QDA research should maintain flexibility, it still has a generic structure (Flick, 2009; Miles et al., 2013). It begins with identifying the phenomenon the researcher is interested in studying and its conceptual framework, that is, its key factors, components and constructs. It then moves to formulate a research question which the study will pursue. Following this, a case definition takes place, which may take different forms such as identifying a research population or a space in which the phenomenon takes place. Next is the sampling stage in which participants, or the research group, are recruited for the study. In the following stage, which is occasionally referred to as instrumentation, (Miles et al., 2013) data is collected through the chosen research method, which is most often qualitative but can also be quantitative in some cases. The data is then presented in print, through transcribing the interviews' recordings if the data is in audio form. It is then analysed according to themes in a process most often referred to as coding (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). At this stage, themes that emerge from the data are coded and highlighted. The process of coding is not linear and codes tend to change throughout the coding process, as with each new piece of information, the understanding and framing of the themes changes and becomes more finely-tuned and comprehensive. The researcher then retreats from the data and through her analytic work emerges with the findings, that is her interpretation of the data integrated with the conceptual framework that was applied in earlier stages of the research (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Heuer, 1996). It is important to note that unlike positivist research findings, the findings of a constructivist study are not

considered absolute and universal truth but rather, one possible interpretation of the researched phenomenon for the subjects of the study (Weber, 1949).

### **Conducting this Study**

Before presenting details of how this study was conducted, I want to address some ethical and methodological considerations which presented several dilemmas during the research process.

#### **Ethical and Methodological Considerations**

**The position of the researcher in the field.** For the purposes of full disclosure, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher of this study is himself a conscientious objector, who, as a reserve duty soldier, objected to serving in the OPT. The researcher was not imprisoned for his objection but was re-assigned to a non-combatant unit in the IDF.

Experiencing a similar process to that of the participants in this study had several benefits, but had also presented some challenges and dilemmas for the researcher.

#### ***Challenges and dilemmas stemming from the researcher's personal background.***

The first challenge the researcher faced was the potential influence of his own narrative and insights on the way participants' stories were elicited, analysed and framed. In order to meet this challenge, the process of analysis had to be as transparent as possible. In the interests of greater transparency, the researcher's own narrative has to be accessible to readers. Thus, a transcription of an interview given by the researcher is enclosed as appendix A. This interview was conducted by Dr. Rachel Rafferty, a colleague of the researcher, for her own PhD research (Rafferty, 2017).

Additionally, it was important for the researcher to be able to distance himself from the subjects during the analysis phase, which required considerable reflection on his part on the themes which emerged from the interviews and those that did not. The main reason for confidence that this reflection was successful is that the findings of this study differ

markedly from his own understanding about the process he underwent, which is included as appendix A. Although the emotion of empathy played a central role in his decision to object, it has not emerged as central in the participants' narratives, as will be discussed in chapter nine. Thus, as an additional measure of transparency, acknowledging findings which contradict the researcher's own experience indicates that he has been able to avoid imposing his own assumptions on the research findings.

***Benefits of sharing the experience of conscientious objector.*** In addition to challenges, the personal closeness of the researcher to the research group entailed several benefits. First, the researcher was able to understand and use the specialised jargon of soldiers. Additionally, being personally familiar with the experience of military service in Israel, basic training and service in the OPT enabled the researcher to understand and relate to the narratives of the participants without requiring any clarification.

Second, one of the typical concerns regarding interviewing participants whose actions are considered illegal in their country or who belong to closed social groups is establishing trust (Mackenzie, McDowell, & Pittaway, 2007; Ostrander, 1993; Strub & Priest, 1976). The fact that the researcher's background is similar to that of the participants, made trust-building trouble-free. Moreover, as will be described later, the recruitment of participants was conducted mostly through the researcher's social and professional networks in Israel. Therefore, for most participants, there was a mutual acquaintance who could vouch for the researcher's integrity and sincerity, thus enabling trust-building. The researcher was viewed by the participants as a member of their peer-group of COs, of which the importance will be discussed in chapters seven and eight. The participants were not concerned about being politically or personally judged, and their collaboration and openness as interviewees indicate that they were neither defensive nor apologetic in their communication.

**The study's moral stance.** This study does not take a neutral political or moral stance. Superficially, it could be argued that as far as psychological mechanisms are concerned, left-wing disobedience can be seen as a mirror image of right-wing conformism. There are numerous examples of right-wing conscientious objectors in Israel, who refused to follow orders, as they perceived them to be harming Jewish settlers. Right-wing objection in Israel is based not so much on right-wing political views, but rather on religious views of Zionism (Cohen, 2007; Gans, 2002)<sup>12</sup>. However, in a more thorough examination, this comparison seems to be out of place or, at the very least, does not serve the purposes of the present study for several reasons. First, while left-wing objectors are turning away from the narrative and socialization processes they were brought up within, right-wing objectors act in accordance with the moral expectations of their religious Zionist social group<sup>13</sup>, namely to avoid hurting Jews and Jewish settlements in the OPT. This implies that while left-wing objectors can be viewed as undergoing transformation, those on the right-wing see their viewpoint as consistent with their moral choices – fighting and policing Palestinians, which, as this is the normal daily conduct of the IDF, remains consistent with their world view, and only when the system's demands change (for example, to evacuate settlers), does their moral reasoning require them to object to such orders.

Second, as was demonstrated in chapters two and three, very different mechanisms and conditions come into play in the cases of in-group obedience and disobedience. Thus, although potentially involving similar actions of objection and sanctions of imprisonment,

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<sup>12</sup> Although there are some exceptions where non-religious right-wing political leaders called for right-wing conscientious objection (see, for example: Haetzni, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> The Zionist stream identified as Religious-Nationalism or Religious-Zionism has integrated religious considerations and principles into the Zionist movement, much against the ideas held by (and to some extent, as a philosophical bridge between) the Zionist movement's secular founders who rejected religious practices on the one hand, and the anti-Zionist ultra-orthodox old Jewish establishment, which rejected Zionism on the other hand (Schwartz, 2009; Don-Yehiya, 1987).

the two political orientations are essentially different in the social and psychological processes involved.

Finally, in accordance with recent global political trends, there has been a significant increase in the literature on radicalization and the adoption of extreme political outlooks and action (see, for example: Alimi, Bosi, & Demetriou, 2012; Borum, 2011; Demetriou, Malthaner, & Bosi, 2014; Silke, 2008). However, as this study is concerned specifically with processes which correspond with reduction in hostility towards out-groups and turning away from violence, only the left-wing objectors' case can provide relevant and useful understanding of such processes. In this way, this study does not claim to be ideologically neutral. Rather, it seeks to identify processes which clearly promote inclusive, humanistic and universal values, as it assumes that they can provide a more likely setting for conflict transformation and a more peaceful world.

**Participants' safety.** As all interviews were conducted online via Skype, the research held no immediate risk for the researcher. However, although minimal, two potential implications for the interviewees were considered.

First, left-wing conscientious objection is not only illegal in Israel but is also frowned upon by most Israeli Jews, both those holding right-wing and Zionist left-wing views. Although all of the participants are currently not being prosecuted by the state or the IDF, they may suffer some social harassment (for example, on social media), discrimination (for example, in their workplaces) and even physical hostility by right-wing activists and public disapproval<sup>14</sup>. For this reason high priority was given to measures to protect the participants' confidentiality and anonymity. All data collected, including interview

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<sup>14</sup> For example, the NGO Breaking the Silence, though not directly supporting COs is being prosecuted both formally and informally in Israel for criticizing the policies enacted in the OPT (see, for example: Eldar, 2016; Skop, 2016).

recordings and transcriptions were stored on password-protected computers under aliases, with only the researcher and his supervisors having access to these files. A file with personal information details was stored in a separate location and deleted on completion of the data collection phase. In accordance with the policy of the University of Otago, raw data stored at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies will be deleted by the centre's administrator after five years.

Additionally, since this research essentially focuses on the psychological processes that participants underwent, no specific details which could be used to identify them, such as military unit or detailed descriptions of incidents, were revealed in the thesis, nor will they be in any future publication based on this research. To ensure participants' control over the recorded content of the interview, each received a copy of the interview transcript and was able to request the removal or editing of any material before the interviews progressed to the data analysis phase.

Second, for some of the participants, the psychological process involved may have also included the recollection of traumatic or emotionally stressful events and experiences, which they would not wish to remember or re-experience during the interview. For this reason, the consent form (see appendix C) emphasized the voluntary nature of the interview. The researcher is an experienced group facilitator, with special expertise in working with Israeli and Palestinian participants in dialogue encounters involving trauma and highly-charged emotional experiences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As the research proceeded to the interview phase, it occasionally occurred that a participant was not interested in elaborating on certain traumatic events, such as Niv's reluctance to talk about his imprisonment, and this was fully respected by the researcher. At the same time, many of the participants expressed their gratitude not only for being heard but to have the opportunity to reflect on their own personal process of transformation,

specifically in relation to early socialization and masculinity formation. This indicates that the participants not only contributed to the research but also gained a deeper understanding of it themselves.

### **Ontological and Epistemological considerations**

**Ontology.** In this study, the research questions are ontological in essence, as they attempt to explore the nature of both barriers to selective conscientious objection and the process leading to it. However, there are two ontological assumptions underlying this exploration which should be acknowledged and reviewed throughout the research process.

The first assumption is that the two different ethical choices regarding military service, which participants made on two different occasions indicate that there is an inconsistency in their sets of moral values or, at the very least, in how they prioritize their values. However, as will be presented in chapter eight, which closely observes the process of transformation, the process of transformation can be viewed and explained as an interaction by cognitive, social and emotional experiences which the participants had. Thus, while the initial ontological assumption as to the nature of transformation is a useful starting point for defining the research population and identifying potential participants, as the empirical data begins to accumulate, it is important to revisit this assumption, with close attention to narratives expressed by the participants.

The second underlying ontological assumption of this study is that a theoretical framework should emerge from the analysis of the interviews, which can be used to move from a descriptive form of theory to a prescriptive one. In other words, the second ontological assumption stresses that general patterns and phenomena which an empirical analysis elicits can be used intentionally to direct similar transformation processes. It is therefore important to stress that while the findings of this study have some practical implications, it does not aspire to offer a comprehensive framework for intervention but

rather, suggest guidelines for a theory of change, requiring further research, which can generalize its concepts and test assumptions that emerge from the current study in regard to effective intervention in conflicts.

**Epistemology.** The main epistemological concern regarding personal narratives refers to the personal ‘filter’, which participants in interviews naturally employ. For example, as will be presented in chapter eight as the *morality conundrum*, although the act of objection was carried out on moral grounds, hardly any of the participants refers to the transformation process he underwent in terms of modified moral values. This finding raises an epistemological question in regard to whether this majority view indicates that no moral transformation has taken place or, instead, that for some reason it was hard for participants to identify or admit that they have undergone a moral transformation. This dilemma requires choosing between searching the so-called truth about the process of transformation and settling for the participants’ perceptions of it. While possible explanations from the literature will be presented, according to which participants may have chosen to disregard moral transformation while it had actually taken place, it is this study’s choice to limit its conclusions to the perceptions of the participants. There are two main reasons for this choice to refrain from seeking the actual nature of transformation. First, unlike other methodologies in psychology which are aimed at identifying unintended thoughts and behaviour (see, for example, Woodside, 2006) the methodology of QDA, chosen for this study, does not provide tools to uncover unintended or unconscious meanings from the gathered data.

Second, inferring from the findings regarding participants’ narratives’ subconscious meanings would jeopardise the researcher’s intention to avoid imposition of his own expectations on the data. Thus, assuming that moral transformation has in fact taken place and that participants are trying to deny this for different reasons (as profoundly as they may have been established by existing literature) opens a slippery slope for misinterpretation of



the data according to the researcher's own preferences and hypotheses, unsupported by the empirical evidence gained.

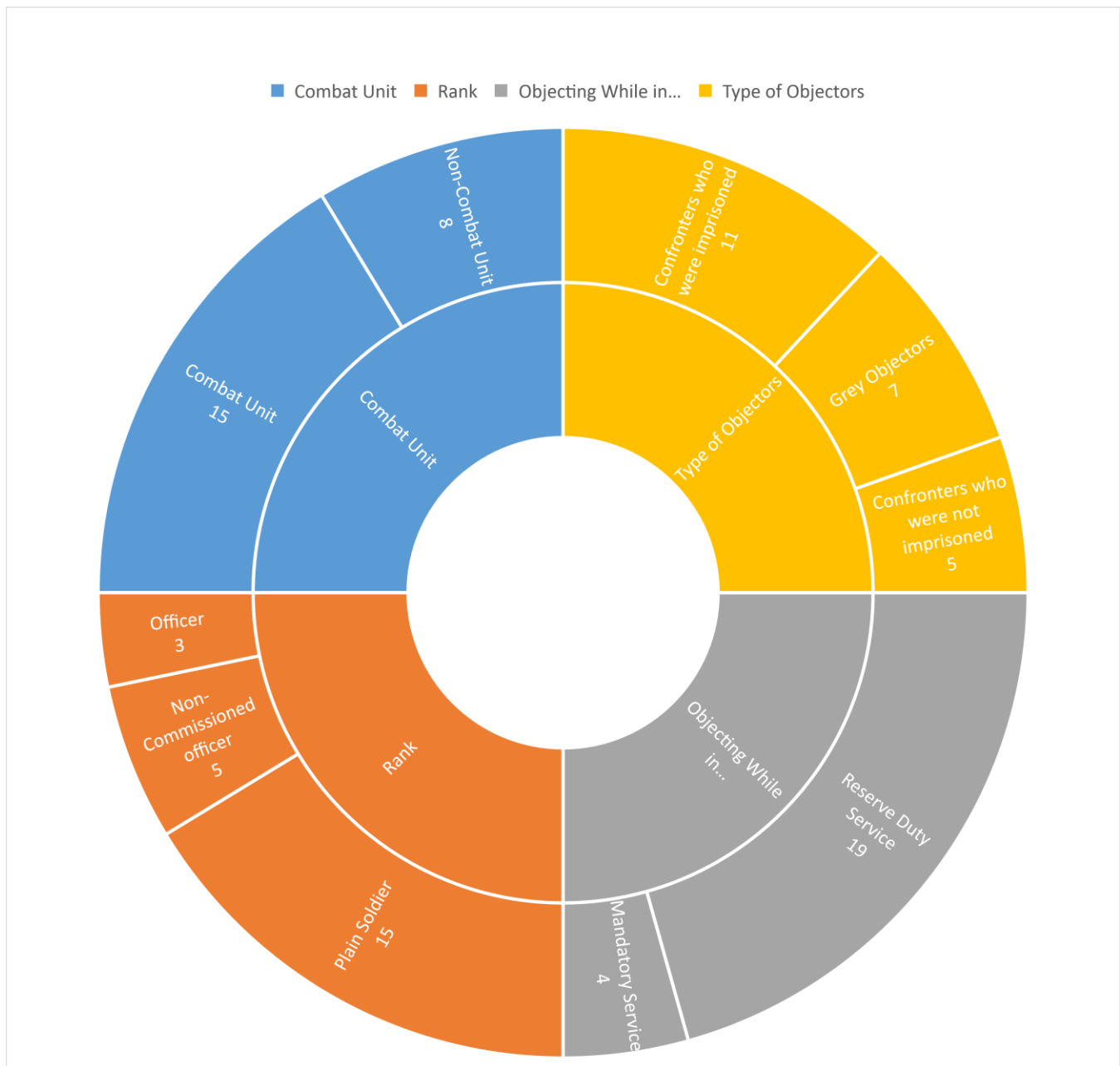
### **Research Procedure**

**Research population and research group.** The research population for this study consists of male Jewish Israeli citizens who served in the Israeli Defence Force IDF and who at some point, during either their compulsory or reserve duty service, objected to an order or refused to carry out their military duties for conscientious reasons. Their act of objection took place either by directly confronting the military system by disobeying orders or by *grey objection*, namely by finding other non-confrontational ways of not following orders, such as using medical reasons to be discharged.

I chose this specific research population because I was interested in identifying a social group whose members had transformed from obedient soldiers to SCOs. Since the participants were all motivated to accept a military role at one point but refused it later, it could reasonably be assumed that they have undergone a transformative process of the kind this study takes an interest in.

The characteristics of the research group are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Characteristics of the Research Group.



The research group consists of twenty-three men, all of whom objected to military service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) or in the IDF altogether, due to moral reasons. The participants range in age from twenty to fifty, and had been recruited to and served in the IDF, as part of the Israeli Security Service Law (Knesset, 1986). Fifteen of the interviewees served in combat units, while eight served in non-combat units, such as

military intelligence, and technological and logistic support units. Three of the participants were officers, five were non-commissioned officers and fifteen plain soldiers. Four of the participants became objectors during their mandatory three-year military service, while nineteen did so as reserve duty soldiers. Sixteen of the participants declared that they refused for moral reasons, often while confronting their superior officers, while seven were grey objectors, that is, they found other ways to avoid service in the OPT or the military altogether. Of the sixteen participants who confronted their superior officers, eleven were imprisoned for their objection at least once, while five other objectors were not imprisoned.

**Recruitment of participants.** Three methods were employed to recruit participants for the study. The first was through the researcher's personal networks of peace activists in Israel. Second, the researcher contacted NGOs supporting COs in Israel, requesting them to ask if any of their clients would be willing to participate in the research. By this means, the researcher contacted five Israeli NGOs which support COs or have COs among their activists:

- Yesh Gvul. Literally translated as 'there is a limit / border', Yesh Gvul is a movement which was established in 1982, in the early days of the first Lebanon War, during which some 3,000 Israeli reserve duty soldiers signed a petition, under Yesh Gvul's name, in which they declared their objection to serving in Lebanon. Some 150 of these soldiers were court marshalled. (Yesh Gvul, n.d.).
- Ometz Lesarev. Translated as 'Courage to Refuse', the Ometz Lesarev movement was established in 2002, when a group of Israeli reserve duty officers and combat soldiers signed a public letter addressed to the then prime minister Ariel Sharon. In the letter, the soldiers declared their refusal to serve in the OPT. Since 2002, over 600 soldiers have signed the letter, which is still available for signing (Ometz Lesarev, n.d.).

- New Profile, a feminist organization objecting to militarism in Israel (New Profile, n.d.).
- Breaking the Silence (Hebrew: Shovrim Shtika). Founded in 2004, this is an organization of veteran combatants who served in the OPT and who decided that the Israeli public has to be exposed to the reality of everyday life in the OPT and to the acts they were ordered to conduct as soldiers. Breaking the Silence collects testimonies of Israeli soldiers of military misconduct and routine action in their military service (Shovrim Shtika, n.d.).
- Combatants for Peace. Established in 2006, Combatants for Peace is an Israeli-Palestinian joint organization of former combatants who decided to work together non-violently to end Israeli occupation and all other forms violence between Israelis and Palestinians (Combatants for Peace, n.d.).

The third recruitment method was reputational recruitment, or snowballing, which has been found to be useful in studies focusing on research groups that are hard to identify within the general population (Snow, Hucheson, & Prather, 1981). In this technique, under the assumption that there is a network or a community of COs who are familiar with each other, participants who were recruited by one of the first two methods were asked to contact any other COs they knew and ask them if they would be willing to be interviewed for this study.

In the first communication with potential participants, the researcher explained the purposes of the research and the consequences of taking part in the study in an information sheet for participants (see appendix B). The participants were asked to sign a consent form, outlining the general purpose of the research, its confidentiality and voluntary nature (see appendix C). Once each participant had agreed to participate in the study, a Skype interview was scheduled.

Recruitment of participants for the study was challenging, considering current Israeli public opinion trends. During the phase of recruitment, the Israeli government expressed very strong criticism of the aforementioned NGOs, with Breaking the Silence being the target of the strongest attacks by both right-wing and centre politicians, as well as right-wing grass roots political activists and common Jewish citizens (Matar, 2015). This made the process of recruitment very difficult, as many COs preferred to avoid being interviewed due to this public atmosphere, which since then has only become increasingly negative towards Breaking the Silence and similar NGOs. Nevertheless, twenty-three COs agreed to participate in the study, while a further seven refused.

**Conducting the interviews.** Each interview opened with the researcher repeating the terms specified in the consent form, which the participants had signed, and a brief explanation of the purpose and focus of the research and the interview, as well as of the voluntary and confidential nature of the interview.

This study used semi-structured interviews (Drever, 1995), that is, interviews which allow the interviewees to describe their life stories in the way they chose, but which also have more focused, open-ended questions which the participants may not mention but are important to the researcher, as they reflect theoretical concepts or assumptions, to which the researcher wanted participants' responses. The design of the interview outline (see appendix D) aimed at both obtaining the participants' authentic perceptions and narratives, and addressing the research questions of this study. Despite concerns that participants might not be willing to openly discuss their life stories, cooperation was very high.

As the researcher is a native Hebrew speaker, all interviews were conducted in Hebrew via Skype, and were recorded with a third-party software named *Talk Helper - Call Recorder for Skype*, which records the audio and video channels of the interview separately. Each of the interviews started as a video conversation but in most cases, after a short

introduction, the participants chose to turn off the web camera and conduct the interview via the audio channel alone, in order to improve the listening quality by removing the high consumption of broadband by the video channel.

Considering the importance of participants' safety, as discussed above, the recordings of video channels were deleted immediately and the audio channels stored on a separate hard drive under the aliases that the participants had chosen.

**Processing the interviews.** Each audio recording was fully transcribed in Hebrew and filed under the alias chosen by each participant. The transcription was then sent to the participant with the offer of editing the text to avoid misinterpretation and allow any information which might potentially disclose identity details to be removed. Three participants returned such requests and comments, which were fully embedded in the transcriptions. All other participants confirmed that the transcription matched their narratives and that they approved its use under the stated conditions of confidentiality.

**Data analysis and structure of findings chapters.** In the next stage, all the transcribed interviews were coded into categories. The coding process was conducted in Hebrew, in order to preserve the original meanings and nuances from the Hebrew interviews. Once the coding process was completed, selected extracts were translated into English with the intention of maintaining the style of the spoken language of the original texts.

**Data presentation.** Data presentation in the findings chapters followed several principles. First, as mentioned above, in order to ensure participants' safety, all the names indicating the identities of the participants are aliases. The use of names instead of other methods (for example, participant A, participant B) has two purposes. One is to allow readers to meet the same participants throughout the findings chapters and become familiar with them in the different contexts where they are quoted or referred to. The second purpose

is to allow the participants who read this thesis to identify themselves in the findings, as each participant has chosen his own alias.

Second, direct quotes of participants are formatted in *italics* to differentiate them from referenced quotations and make it easier for readers to follow the findings chapters.

Third, at the end of each direct quote of a participant, his alias and the lines in the Hebrew transcription where the quote is taken from are shown in parentheses. This is intended to both easily identify the place in the interview the quote is taken from, as well as maintain transparency for the participants, who can check their own transcripts and make sure that their words were not taken out of context.

Finally, occasionally there was a need to clarify terms or complete unfinished utterances. These clarifications and completions are indicated in square brackets.

## Chapter 5: Findings - Background and Early Socialization

This chapter reviews the common narratives and stages of life from early childhood to enlistment in the IDF, which participants describe in their interviews.

### Background

#### Political Orientation from Home

**Parents' political stands.** Most of the participants in the research come from moderate Zionist left-wing homes, while two come from right-wing families. The levels of political involvement of their parents vary, but all of them – even those who were very critical of government policies – remained within the boundaries of the Zionist mainstream. Tomer explains:

*This is really the debate to this day between the Labour<sup>15</sup> and Likud<sup>16</sup> parties: no one questions the status of the military or its assignments. Even in Meretz party<sup>17</sup> today – Zehava Galon [leader of Meretz party] proudly says her sons are combat soldiers ... It's indisputable. Also, Hashomer Hatzair<sup>18</sup> members in the Kibbutzim<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> The political representative of the Zionist moderate left-wing in Israel. It is rooted in the historic Mapai party, a Zionist-Socialist party, which was the hegemonic political power in Israel from the early 1930s (in the pre-state Jewish institutions) until 1977, when it lost the elections to the right-wing Likud party for the first time (Havoda, n.d.).

<sup>16</sup> The Zionist-conservative right-wing party. The Likud Party started out as a group of parties that united in 1973 just before the elections to the 8th Knesset, and included Herut, the Liberal Party, the Free Center, the National List, and the Labor Movement for Greater Israel. The party headed by Menachem Begin first came to power in 1977, in what would eventually be referred to as "the Upheaval". It has been in power during most of the years since (Likud, n.d.).

<sup>17</sup> The most left-wing Zionist party, which stands for human and civil rights, social-democratic economy, political moderation and ending Israeli occupation of the OPT Meretz, n.d.

<sup>18</sup> The first Zionist youth movement. Hashomer Hatzair was founded in 1913 in Galicia, aiming to find a solution for the Jewish problem from a secular point of view, while adopting the educational approach of other youth movements established in Germany since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which promoted embracing nature, working in small groups and addressing youth concerns. Its core values include Zionism, Socialism and brotherhood of nations (Hashomer-Hatzair, n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> A Kibbutz is a collective community in Israel which dates back to the early 1900s. It is unique to the Zionist movement in that it was originally mostly based on agriculture and was meant to combine Socialist values of equality and Zionist action of the Jewish settlement in mandatory Palestine. In his narrative, Tomer refers to later developments in which the people of the Kibbutzim movement became an exclusionist hegemonic social, ethnic and political group towards and after the establishment of Israel (see: Shafir & Peled, 2002).



*say they are in the left-wing but they still enlist in elite units, paratroopers, armed forces or artillery and they are proud of it* (Tomer, lines 123-127).

One possible explanation for this incompatibility between critical views of government policies and mainstream practices and voting patterns is inherited political camps. More precisely, the large majority of the participants see their parents as part of the social class which built the state of Israel, namely Ashkenazi<sup>20</sup>, secular, middle-higher class and socialist-Zionist (Jonny, lines 3-37; Sergey, lines 23-25). Itamar puts it this way:

*If they dug my grandparents out of their graves and told them that the leader of the Labour party is a jackass and his deputy is Muammar Gaddafi, they would have still voted for the Labour party. They were true Mapainicks* (Itamar, lines 1-5).

One important implication of identifying with this group of Mapainicks is the sense of ownership over the state, says Yaron (lines 5-14), which means both being dominant in its management, but also wishing to contribute to it in any way possible, including its protection. This hegemonic self-perception, says Carlos (lines 49-60), led his parents and this social group to become committed to the Social-Zionist values upon which the state of Israel was founded.

The fact that most participants come from a socio-economic background which is traditionally identified as the majority group in Israel contrasts with the literature, which associates social and political dissent with minority groups, while majority group members are often seen as enjoying social privileges and seeking to preserve and strengthen them (Gurr, 1993; Levine & Choi in: Jetten & Hornsey, 2010; Nemeth & Chiles, 1988).

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<sup>20</sup> A Jew originated in western, non-Muslim European countries (Ashkenaz is the ancient Hebrew name of today's Germany). Ashkenazi Jews are considered the hegemonic social group in Israel which established the Zionist movement, took all key positions in the early days of the state of Israel and, to this day, enjoys privileges and access to sources of power in Israel (See: Kimmerling, 2001; Shafir & Peled, 2002).

Perhaps the explanation for this incompatibility with the literature can be settled by the influence of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the success of Likud party in the 1996 elections. This turn of events and shift of political power had given this group the feeling that their state was taken from them and that they could no longer do whatever they want, says Itamar (lines 271-275), thus implying that in some sense, this majority group became a minority group in that the Israeli official narrative of constantly *reaching out for peace* had lost its validity.

Additionally, a few participants came from a more right-wing background and even religious Zionist one. In the words of Shmulik:

*The basic assumption is that the land of Israel belongs as a whole to the Jewish people and Jews can live everywhere, of course ... it was clear that we are not guided by liberal or foreign concepts of ethics but rather – by the Torah* (Shmulik, lines 19-46).

**Shared humanist values.** Either coming from left-wing or right-wing homes, every one of the participants remember their parents expressing humanist values, emphasizing to their children that all humans are equal. Yaron (lines 456-458) remembers how he was brought up believing that Zionism and socialism are inseparable and so for him, Zionism meant compassion for your fellow human being. Yonatan also refers to the very clear notion from home that *“Arabs are human beings just like us ... It was very clear that we are not racist, that racism is bad”* (Yonatan, line 149) and Tomer (lines 49-54) completes this idea, saying that we should respect everyone, regardless of his or her political opinions. Yonatan (line 20) even attributes his later shift to the more radical left-wing to the values he absorbed from his parents from a very early age.

The main difference between the participants and their parents is not in their different ethics but in two different problems they identify in their parents' politics namely

naïve or passive politics and incoherent politics. First, in terms of naïve or passive politics, although many of their parents held and expressed firm political views, very few of them actually took action, such as civil disobedience, beyond occasionally participating in political demonstrations. Yaron (lines 465-467) mentions how his family used to talk politics around the dinner table, but this was generally the limit of the political involvement. Yonatan (lines 156-158) and Carlos (lines 42-43) also mention that alongside holding moderate left-wing outlooks, their parents were very conformist, always being concerned about appearing socially acceptable, and not causing any trouble. In this context, passive politics means that political opinions are rarely translated into political action.

A second observation participants express is their parents' inability to make the connection between their humanist values and political reality – that is, what it means to say that all human beings are equal, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the Israeli occupation. For instance, Aaron (lines 64-81) describes his mother as a person who opposes violence in principle, but from an Israeli-patriotic point of view. Similarly, Jonny describes his parents:

*I think that both of them hold political views located in the Israel centre. I think this is mostly due to political unawareness – today I think of it as political ignorance, a stance that unquestionably accepts assumptions such as “we need the state”, like I said – complete identification with the states and its institutions – the military. Saying, “Yes, we are against violence and we support peace but on the other hand, sometimes we must use violence and there is no other choice” and so on – accept most of the things the state is doing without question and supporting it (Jonny, lines 44-49).*

Thus, according to the participants, merely relating to abstract humanist values is not sufficient. They need to be consistently followed up by a critical and unbiased political

understanding of reality and to act accordingly. This inconsistency that participants see between their parents' abstract humanist values and passive support of the occupation refers to the *cognitive dissonance theory* (Festinger, 1962), as well as to *consistency theory*, which similarly argues that cognitive inconsistency triggers discomfort and tension and requires resolution (Abelson, 1983; Abelson et al., 1968; Rosenberg, 1968). Perhaps as a reaction to their parents' political inconsistency, participants place the bar higher for themselves, in that merely being politically involved is no longer sufficient and an actual act of civil disobedience is required.

### **Early Interests and Involvement in Politics and Social Issues**

**Political opinions.** Similarly to the way they describe their parents' political positions, the participants are quite critical of their own political understanding as they were growing up. For example, as a teenager, John (lines 10-39) was very interested in human rights and used to read reports of B'tselem<sup>21</sup> - hardly typical reading materials of Israeli youth. However, and despite being relatively knowledgeable at the time about human rights violations, he looks at his younger self as interpreting reality from the point of view of the Ashkenazi left-wing, portraying the settlers as 'them', the problem, and not critically examining Zionism, as he does today. Gil (lines 78-88), Yonatan (lines 38-45), and Itai (lines 28-33) also express critical opinions about themselves as teenagers. Looking back, they think that despite being affiliated with the political left-wing, the important thing for them was to conform to their peers and not to be seen as troublemakers. In accordance with *social comparison theory* (Festinger, 1954) and the concept of *compliance to group pressure* (Asch, 1955), this finding emphasizes the extreme influence of peer pressure in

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<sup>21</sup> B'tselem, the Israeli information centre for human rights in the OPT is an Israeli NGO, which documents human rights violations of Palestinians by Israelis in the OPT and publishes them to the Israeli public and the international community (B'tselem, n.d.).

adolescence (Claesen, Brown, & Eicher, 1986; Clasen & Brown, 1985; Manzoni, Lotar, & Ricijaš, 2011). In accordance with extensive empirical evidence (Ekström & Östman, 2013; Kiouisis, McDevitt, & Wu, 2005; Mortimore & Tyrrell, 2004; Zaki, Schirmer, & Mitchell, 2011), it implies that political opinions are only partially shaped by one's own values but much more by the surrounding social environment (Carpendale & Krebs, 1992; Passini, 2010).

**Political involvement.** The great majority of the participants remember being very interested and involved in politics and social issues. However, the range of active involvement is quite wide. On the more passive side, we find James (lines 139-140) and Niv (lines 149-173) who, as teenagers, were interested in politics but at the same time were reluctant to express their opinions in public, either because they were surrounded with right-wing supporters or because of insecurity regarding their knowledge of political and social realities. Later, following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin - and perhaps in relation to him drifting away from his religious faith and practices - James became more explicit and outspoken in expressing his political opinions. Unlike them, Jonny (lines 121-129) recalls participating from a young age in heated political discussions in class but this was as far as he went, in terms of his political involvement.

Other participants remember that as children and youth they were much more politically active. Nir (lines 33-34) marched in political demonstrations with his parents. Ricardo (lines 4-13) and Carlos (lines 77-83) recall being very active politically from a young age, through youth branches of left-wing political parties such as the Israeli communist party. Carlos describes his political urge:

*The truth is that I was always politically involved almost anywhere I went. When I went to the UK for my PhD studies I was politically involved there as well – although not so intensively. It's in my blood. I love it. I think it's morally the right*

*thing to do – try and influence the society you live in in some way. Political action is, by definition, an activity aiming to influence society and it is important to me*

(Carlos, lines 238-242).

## **Early Socialization**

### **Experiencing Social Marginality as a Child**

When referring to their social position in childhood, two main narratives of social positioning emerge from the participants' stories. The first is of participants who grew up feeling comfortable and relatively satisfied with their social surrounding and their position within their social circles. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, many participants included in this category were active members in youth movements.

The second type of social positioning consists of others, some of whom tried participating in youth movements but did not find them socially appealing, and who describe themselves as socially marginal and at times even rejected by their peers. Some describe their social marginality as not conforming to social standards, being portrayed as nerds (Aaron, lines 3-4), introverts (Uri, lines 493-496), insecure (Niv, lines 23-27), late bloomers (Itai, lines 15-16) or suffering from social anxieties (Isaac, lines 39-52). Each of these participants had a different way of coping or addressing this social marginality, ranging from accepting their social position to fighting their way to become socially accepted and even popular. However, what they all have in common is the experience of social loneliness and isolation.

The personal distress accompanying their social marginality was certainly a very unpleasant experience, which many of the participants would have been happy to do without. However, a very important skill or capacity it provided them with was the ability to observe and analyse their society from the outside in a critical manner (Uri, lines 98-115).

For many participants, social marginality also influenced their masculine self-perception and masculinity formation. Indeed, quite a few of the participants in the research had experienced social marginality as children, for their physical or character traits, which are considered to be feminine, such as introversion, being small, insecure or unmanly. Aaron, for example says: *“I was truly a nerd boy. Occasionally I would be beaten up at school”* (lines 3-4). Isaac describes his reluctance to engage in social interactions as an adolescent: *“My adolescence period was not good ... I think I had a social phobia. I used to spend my time reading books and I had great social difficulties as an adolescent. Socially speaking I was very anxious”* (lines 41-43). Itai also felt he was socially excluded because he was small and unconfident: *“I was a short boy, very small, in comparison to children my age, and also a late bloomer – very childlike until I was much older, and I think it had an influence on my self-esteem”* (lines 15-16). But perhaps the most obvious influence of feminine labelling is described by Gil:

*Generally speaking, ever since I can recall I was never classified as the classic masculine figure. Even as early as primary school I was more – it would be stupid to say feminine – but I had never identified with macho conceptions of masculinity and such, and this has been following me for years. In fact, I think I was ridiculed in the early years of primary school exactly for this, for not being boyish enough, that I was this kind of nerd, but specifically, the thing is that my nickname was woman, at that stage ... I don't remember [how I coped with it]. I think it bugged me ... I don't think I really had a way to deal with it beyond just living with it* (Gil, lines 484-493).

**Coping with social marginality.** There are different ways to deal with social exclusion and marginality. One, which is described in Gil's story above, is just trying to live with it - to survive. Others have partially accepted their position as external to the social mainstream:

*I never had a strong sense of belonging to a social group, if at all. I was relatively an introverted boy, I used to read a lot – not necessarily in Hebrew – in a class which was separated from the other classes of my age group – a class of gifted children – and also with not many hobbies – not a physical sports-loving person, so I also spent most of my time indoors. So, I cannot say that I have a strong sense of belonging, of being part of something (Uri, lines 493-496).*

Others had taken a more pro-active approach, of self-transformation, such as the one that Niv describes:

*I didn't fit very well into the social order. I was sloppy, in my appearance. I had no self-awareness. I used to come with sweat pants to school and I had really long hair and everyone would laugh at me. I was bullied. So, for a long time I was insecure and I constantly tried to connect – I kept looking for my social place in my class ... I think it was in year 6 or 7, when someone uploaded a picture of me online and ridiculed me and I remember myself in year 7 deciding to have a haircut, to go to Blue Bird [clothing store] to buy clothes, to buy jeans ... Ever since then I learned, I think, how to integrate. As time passed I also took the position of the funny one, which also helped. In year 9 or 10, one of the kids who harassed me the most told me that he could not believe that it was me back then, after I had practically become a different person (Niv, lines 24-34).*

The literature on the effects of early social exclusion is extensive (see, for example: Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2005; Juvonen & Gross, 2005; Williams, Forgas, & Von Hippel, 2005). Long-term effects of being a social outcast during childhood are mostly negative and range from anxious and self-protective communication styles, pessimism and withdrawal from challenging tasks, all the way to anti-social and criminal behaviours. Specifically, empirical evidence indicates that there is a strong connection between social exclusion and



anti-social behaviour, with some indications of conforming or mimicking behaviours of in-group members (Williams et al., 2005). However, there is little evidence that early social exclusion is associated with pro-social behaviour in adulthood.

### **Masculine Socialization**

Socialization into militarized masculinity begins at a very early age. Growing up as a boy struggling to be a man was not an easy or pleasant experience, says Jonny. It involved a constant struggle to prove himself a man, and to compete with other boys for social status, while striving not to be portrayed as weak, effeminate, tough and unspoiled:

*It was a long process, which took me a long time to articulate and understand, but I realized that I was miserable because I was not strong and I was a weak man and maybe, in some senses, feminine. I was constantly in a contest to prove my masculinity and this contest was constantly present and outspoken ... [In my youth movement] the issue of physical challenge was ever present – It is of the essence to do things the hardest way possible, to climb a cliff, not enjoy the walk so much as to overcome great physical challenges, such as reaching your limits and not complain and to eat your food with sand on purpose – to put sand in your spaghetti – it's like showing off and I suffered from it a great deal. Retrospectively, I understand that I was a spoiled child, to some degree, sensitive and used to comfort. Retrospectively I ask myself – I did enjoy it and was attracted to it. I mean, I didn't suffer there but on the other hand, this thing that you constantly need to prove your toughness was hard for me. It's very painful for me to think about it now (Jonny, lines 79-94).*

Another masculine trait, which Jonny describes, of growing up as a boy was the necessity to endure pain. Whether while fighting or playing aggressive games, he describes his socialization as a boy as very violent:

*We were fighting at school – both in primary school and in junior high-school – I fought often and it was hard, as if you constantly need to prove yourself to be strong ... We are boys and part of it, part of the game ... There's this game you play with a football ... to kick the ball as hard as you can at each other – all kinds of violent and painful games, in which you are supposed to absorb pain and you are supposed to inflict pain unto others – and it was very hard for me (Jonny, lines 750-757).*

**The role of the father figure.** It seems that the type of father figure a young boy has influences his attitude towards masculinity as he grows up and matures. Several participants feel that they missed a proper father figure as they were growing up, either because one was not present in their lives or because the one they had did not provide a sufficient example and role model in his conduct and character.

***Absence of or insignificant father figure.*** Aaron's father, a shell-shocked Vietnam War veteran, did his best to dissuade his son from enlisting in the Israeli military (Aaron, 33-38). Ironically, or perhaps just for spite, Aaron chose to join the military academy at the age of sixteen. He mentions the weak father figure he had seen at home, and the search for a strong masculine role model as one of the reasons for this choice:

*I think that in some way I only wanted to become manly, rough, more focused, but I was also looking for a figure who would provide me with confidence, a sort of a father figure, someone authoritative who would tell you what to do, perhaps be even slightly violent, which I really missed at home. My dad was always disconnected, not comprehensible so much. You could never tell what was going on in his mind. He was very unconventional. I think that until a very old age he kept asking me to call him by his name because he wanted me to consider him as a friend rather than my father. And I needed more masculine figures to be around (Aaron, lines 124-129).*

For Isaac, whose father lived overseas and was not present in his daily life, preparation for military service was driven, among other things, by the search for masculinity, in the absence of a masculine father figure, says Isaac:

*I think that during high school and towards the military service it was definitely a way of substantiating a certain sense of masculinity which was underdeveloped because of the absence of a father and also the personality of the father, as I mentioned – very passive ... So, I think that in a sense I have formed here [in Israel] a hero while he was there [in the US] (Isaac, lines 468-472).*

Thus, the absence of, or insignificant, father figure is something that does not pass unnoticed for some boys as they grow older and develop their own masculinity. The absence of a significant role model may push young men to seek role models that can provide some masculine traits not encountered at home.

***Traditionally masculine father figure.*** For many participants, their fathers, as masculine role models, provided a very traditional understanding of manliness, one that lacks some of the traits, which Jonny values very highly today, such as being affectionate, outspoken, and supportive:

*If I compare myself to my father's and to his friends' attitudes, they are just opposite to my own. My dad, who grew up in a Kibbutz, is so detached from any emotion, I mean, expressing his emotions, telling me he loves me... He never told me he loved me nor that he is proud of me. He barely hugs me and kisses me – it's rare, rare and awkward. It's clear to me that first of all, I compare myself to him and, of course, this influenced me since he is my father – he didn't give it to me, so I have this emotional deprivation (Jonny, lines 867-867).*

As will be shown later, in the section on alternative masculinity, COs develop different perceptions of masculinity than the traditional ones. This may be, in part, as a

rebellious response not only to the political system, but also to the conditions in which their masculinity was shaped.

**Mixed messages.** Regarding their attitudes toward military service, some participants remember receiving mixed and confusing messages from their fathers. On the one hand, as children, many of the participants remember their fathers coming home from reserve duty service. Tomer (lines 40-42) remembers his father returning home in uniform from his reserve duty, bringing him and his siblings candies he purchased at the canteen of his base. James (lines 59-60) also remembers his father's reserve duty service, and especially the fact that neither his father nor his mother were very happy with the service. Nonetheless, his father kept on in his service.

On the other hand, most of the participants describe a different type of father figure, strongly identified with the father's military service, despite often holding Zionist left-wing political opinions, even with critical attitudes towards the Israeli occupation and policies in the OPT. This type of father figure presented a very clear militarized masculinity model, as well as expectations of his son's military service, leaving them very little choice about choosing their path regarding their military service:

*My dad is a classic example of the combination of the Peace Now activists, who organize the demonstrations and dedicate much time to this, but then receive their reserve duty recruitment order. He is the first one to show up in his unit – whether to serve in Lebanon or the OPT. I think that the paratrooper part of him ... is very central in his identity ... He very strongly opposed CO and saw it as almost a catastrophe (Gal 61-67).*

These types of father figure correspond partially with research conducted by Coley (1998), according to which there are consistently positive links between children's social interactions with men and their cognitive and behavioural development. Specifically,

warmth and control were found as two significant contributions of father-figures to children's development. These findings suggest that the absence of warmth or control (or both) in the relations between a child and his father figure could potentially drive many of the child's life choices towards searching for an adequate father figure, such as the one that Aaron describes he was looking for at the military academy. Thus, the appeal of the military may become apparent and promote the development of hypermasculinity perceptions and behaviours.

**Military-related socialization agents.** Three main agents of socialization are mentioned as influential in regard to shaping attitudes towards military service: family, school and youth movements.

**Family.** Almost all the participants were exposed to the military through their family members' stories of their own military service and from seeing their fathers come home in uniform from their reserve duty service. However, the messages that the participants received at home about military service were not necessarily glorifying or consistent with the IDF, as it was in the school system, and they often contained mixed messages. For example, Gal describes his father as both a left-wing activist against the first Lebanon war, but also an enthusiastic reserve duty soldier, who strongly opposed conscientious objectors (Gal, lines 61-67).

Some other participants, remember mostly negative association of the IDF in the stories they heard as children. Lior remembers his mother spending years exposing a friendly fire incident, which was covered up by the IDF (Lior, lines 15-24). In an even more tragic case, Omer's father took his own life, presumably after struggling with prolonged and poorly treated effects of shell shock in the 1973 war. A few years later, his foster father was killed in a friendly fire accident as a reserve duty soldier (Omer 5-25).

Accordingly, many participants don't feel their parents had great expectations of them serving in combat roles. On the contrary, a few of them received extremely discouraging messages from their parents and older siblings regarding military service (Dan, lines 50-55; Niv, lines 385-395; Aaron, lines 33-38). Niv even remembers his mother explicitly telling him that no matter what he does, the most important thing is that he wouldn't serve in a combat role (line 124-125).

Yaron also describes the ambiguous messages he received at home regarding his military service:

*[I come from a] very Zionist home, so when I said I wanted to be a combat soldier – and I really wanted to be a combat soldier – my parents told me: Go to the Shekem<sup>22</sup> – they didn't like my idea so much but I never knew whether they really meant it or not... I got this sense from them that on the one hand they are proud of me being a paratrooper but on the other hand - they would have preferred it if I had a non-combatant medical profile (Yaron, lines 15-36).*

**School.** Although the process of recruitment to the military begins at the age of 17, the participants describe processes of preparing children for military service going back to as early as their preschool education. These include education for ethnocentric and nationalistic values, according to Carlos (lines 23-36).

Later, as the youth pass through adolescence and start preparing for their military service, their socialization processes become closely related to and strongly influenced by their fast-approaching recruitment to military service, says Carlos:

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<sup>22</sup> Shekem is a military base cafeteria in Hebrew – in daily conversation it symbolizes the least combat position possible in the military.

*When you are approaching this age of the first recruitment order and later, when you get enlisted, because of peer influence you are constantly subjected to a brainwashing process, which you are not always aware of* (Carlos, lines 14-15).

The main institutions that accompany this process of pre-military socialization are the school and youth movements, in which the vast majority of participants took place as adolescents. Even left-wing youth movements actively encourage and expect their graduates to take combat military service, as the highest fulfilment and implementation of the Zionist ideal, says Carlos (15-20). Similarly, schools encourage students to take pride in combat military roles, describes Issac (39-40). Niv remembers a typical introduction to the military ethos in his own school:

*If I think of high school period, the preparation for military service was ever present. In year 10 this guy who was a fitness trainer of the rangers' youth movement walked into my classroom and hung up a poster saying that seventeen people who participated last year got into the Sayeret Matkal elite forces, ten got into Duvdevan counter terrorist unit and so on ... Starting from this period, I think, all the guys in my social circle talked about the military, started training for service through combat fitness and long and short distance running* (Niv, lines 98-103).

School is mentioned by participants as a strong factor in anticipation of and preparation for their future military service. These preparations involve emotional and motivational components of peer pressure, as well as active encouragement of the school itself to the most combative military service, say Carlos (lines 14-20) and Isaac (lines 39-40). However, military-related socialization was also promoted through the official school curriculum:

*[At school] you are taught supposedly non-political studies – but the way is extremely political. For instance, when the school celebrates Hanukkah – you know*

*that before Zionism, the emphasis in Hanukkah was on the miracle of the cruse of oil<sup>23</sup>. Since the beginning of Zionism, the focus moved from the divine-miraculous to the militaristic aspect of the Maccabees ... [Another example is] how the Holocaust is taught. Why do they call it the Holocaust and heroism? This combination has also political and ideological implications because it essentially means that we were the victims and now we are people and heroism is needed to prevent it from happening ever again (Carlos, lines 24-32).*

**Youth movements.** Nineteen of the participants (79%) were active and dedicated members of youth movements during most of their adolescence. It is important to understand the important role that youth movements play in motivating and preparing their members for military service, as most of these movements were established to prepare youth for military service not only in Israel but elsewhere as well. Three main functions emerge from the interviews in regard to the role of youth movements in their members' social and political involvement:

*Social benefits of youth movements.* Social acceptance and support was the main motivation for Lior to join youth movements (Lior, line 28). Nir confirmed this notion, emphasizing how, returning after five years abroad during primary and middle school, he joined Hanoar Haoved youth movement<sup>24</sup>, which smoothed his social reintegration in Israel (Nir, lines 11-14).

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<sup>23</sup> The miracle of the cruse of oil is traditionally one of the reasons for celebrating Hanukkah. In Jewish tradition, after the Maccabees took back the temple from the Greeks, they needed oil to light the Menorah – an oil lamp, which was constantly alight – but they could only find one little cruse (oil container), which at best could have been sufficient for one day of light. However, a miracle took place and the oil in the cruse lasted eight days – the amount of time needed to produce more pure olive oil.

<sup>24</sup> The General Federation of Working and Studying Youth. Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed was founded in the mid 1920's by working youth to defend their rights in the workplace. It was the first Zionist youth movement established in Israel (mandatory Palestine). Currently, it is considered as the largest youth movement in Israel (NOAL, n.d.).



However, being in a youth movement has other aspects than merely being surrounded and supported by friends. Niv still remembers fondly the very empowering and confidence building experience of being an instructor of the younger children. But there was another side to it. When he was in the ninth grade, he was strongly discouraged by very violent norms and hazing<sup>25</sup> processes that he and his age group members had to undergo. Later, due to bullying by one of the senior members, he discontinued his membership. Still, his friends from the Scouts remained his best friends until he graduated from high school (Niv, lines 69-95).

*Education for and formation of moral values and political stands.* Youth movements primarily educate for social involvement, for thinking of the common good, says Yaron (lines 46-48). But beyond consensual social values, youth movements educate for very specific political ones. Carlos mentions the three main ones of Hashomer Hatzair: Zionism, Socialism and Brotherhood of Peoples, in this order (Carlos, lines 37-40). Gal remembers how, as a member of Hashomer Hatzair youth movement, he was politically active in organizing and participating in demonstrations or symposiums (Gal, lines 18-23). Gil also remembers his years in Hashomer Hatzair as a formative period of his political worldview. However, while being left-wing in nature, he says, it was always within the Israeli game rules, so conscientious objection was never considered an option for him at that stage (Gil, lines 23-31).

Similarly, but on the other side of the political spectrum, Shmulik recalls his time in the Bnei Akiva<sup>26</sup> youth movement, which is part of the Religious-Zionist movement. As a

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<sup>25</sup> Hazing is an informal rite of initiation or ongoing humiliating practices targeting newcomers or newer members of certain groups. It is practised, among other places, in the military and often involves physical and mental violence.

<sup>26</sup> Bnei Akiva is a youth movement, which combines the two main principles of Torah and labour, namely promoting the religious ideas related to Zionism and to the Jewish nation, such as settling the entire land of Israel, and encourage physical labour and agriculture as means of building the state of Israel (Bnei Akiva, n.d.).

Bnei Akiva member, at the age of fourteen, he joined Gush Emunim, a religious-nationalistic movement, which played a central role in the Jewish settlement movement in the West Bank and Gaza. Shmulik's involvement took place in fund raising, placing ads on walls, and joining the first settlement action in Sebastia in 1975 (Shmulik, lines 59-62).

Growing up with such profound political activity and involvement made graduates of such youth movements very consistent in their worldview, says Aaron. Despite not being a member himself, he recalls his discussions with graduates of Hashomer Hatzair being very insightful for him:

*I found them to be very special people with solid values ... and I have developed a moral spine, thanks to these people. My discussions with them made me realize who I am, morally speaking – what I support and what I am opposed to ... They inspired me and helped me develop confidence* (Aaron, lines 446-454).

*Preparing for military service.* One of the main functions of the Zionist youth movements (unlike, for instance, the Communist Youth Movement, the majority of whose members are Palestinian citizens of Israel) is motivating and physically preparing youth for their military service. For instance, looking back, Carlos sees it as a brainwashing system, facilitating group pressure to discipline and direct their members towards combat military service (Carlos, lines 4-7). Both Omer (lines 43-46) and Jonny (lines 86-90) also remember how their Sayarut<sup>27</sup> groups were about acquiring military-related skills such as navigation, long walks and endurance.

A unique privilege, which graduates of youth movements in Israel are granted when they enlist in the IDF is the option to carry out military service with their friends from the youth movement as an organic unit, which divides its time between combat service and

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<sup>27</sup> Literally translated as exploring.

working on a Kibbutz. The option to serve with his friends, says Yonatan, made his service much easier and more enjoyable (Yonatan, lines 59-72).

It seems that the influence of both the school system and youth movements on participants' motivation to serve was considerably stronger than the one of their families, as even those participants who were exposed to the negative aspects of military service in their family narratives had never even entertained the thought of not enlisting as they approached the age of eighteen. This stronger effect of school and youth movement highlights the central role which the peer group plays in shaping one's motivation for military service.

These findings are partially congruent with the literature on agents of political socialization. Scholars emphasize family, school and media as the central agents of political socialization of children and youth (Ehman, 1980; Jennings & Niemi, 1968, 2015; McLeod, 2000; Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977). Interestingly, hardly any of the participants, except John, mentions media as influencing the shaping of their political views. If any, most references to the Israeli media mention the failure to provide the Israeli public with sufficient information on the reality of the OPT.

Additionally, although reports do not normally include youth movements in the list of political socialization agents, quite a few Israel-focused studies do refer to youth movements as an important agent (Kahane, 1986, 1997; Kedem & Bar-Lev, 1989). This is a strong indication of the unique place of youth movements in Israel from the very early days of Zionism and their central role in major events such as the establishment of the Kibbutzim or the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (Gutman, 1998).

### **Motivation and Ideology for Military Service**

Despite mixed or even negative messages regarding expectations from their military service, which many of the participants received from their parents and siblings, most of them report a medium to very high motivation for a meaningful service (Lior, lines 35-44;

Itai, lines 59-78; Tomer, lines 8-10; Nir, lines 122-128; Itamar, lines 76-83; Jonny, lines 12-14). However, there were different reasons for this motivation. These reasons can be divided into altruistic motivations, self-focused motivations and social status-related reasons.

**Altruistic motivations.** Gal (lines 136-146) considers his identification with Israel to be at its peak as he was approaching enlisting age. In this sense, combat service was only the logical next step for him, as a way to make a significant contribution to Israeli society and its security. It is important to stress, however, that today, both Gal and others see this will to contribute as political naïveté. Yaron (lines 117-120) says he thought he was joining the defence force but that he didn't really understand what the practice of Israeli occupation entails. And Carlos summarizes:

*I enlisted in the infantry. I walked in the most Zionist path there is – I say this in pain, regret and remorse ... As a single child, I made my parents sign to allow me to be a combat soldier ... Today I look at myself and say: “What a disgrace. How could I be such a retard – being deceived by all of this Zionist brainwash?”. You see where I was? This is an insane dissonance because I held leftist views, though not ripe yet (Carlos, lines 85-92).*

**Self-focused motivations.** As military service is as challenging as it is rewarding, quite a few of the participants mention motivations stemming from a more personal perspective:

***Glorification and improving self-esteem.*** Combat military service is a glorified mission in Israeli society, say Isaac (lines 96-99; lines 126-132) and Yaron (lines 135-137). Thus, living up to this standard served them as both providing social capital and a means to increasing their self-esteem.

**Self-actualization.** One of the most appealing features of the military is the opportunities it provides. Aaron, joined the military academy as a teenager and describes the appealing advertisement which caught his attention:

*The slogan was “only for the best” and there were promises about what they study there and you learn to be a combatant and about military history and training and high fitness ... and it drew me in (Aaron, lines 109-112).*

Similarly, Dan (lines 135-142), who served as a paramedic in an armed forces battalion, decided to go on and complete his tank crew member training, which he stopped midway, to prove to himself that he could do it.

**Self-interest.** In addition to maximizing one's potential, there are also concrete benefits. Ricardo (lines 40-49) explains that despite holding left-wing non-Zionist political views he enlisted because he considered a political career and he knew that it was military service that would allow him to be perceived as a legitimate politician. Additionally, he says, as a student in Israel he would have had many more scholarship possibilities as a veteran.

**Social status related motivation.** Apart from ideology and self-focused motivations, social context plays a significant role in determining the motivation of the future soldiers, as their peer group in the military unit becomes the most significant social group during the three years of their mandatory service and often also later in life.

**Maintaining the same social group of peers.** As mentioned above, for most of the participants who were members of youth movements, the military offered an option to enlist together with their friends and become an organic military unit. This option was very appealing for many of them (James, lines 171-175; Yonatan, lines 59-72; Carlos, lines 135-138) and they followed it through. Additionally, certain units – usually ones with low motivation for recruiting – allow new recruits to choose to be in the same unit with their

friends, an option which guided Dan to prefer the armed forces over other options (Dan, lines 93-94).

***Opportunity for a fresh social start.*** For other participants, such as Yaron (lines 98-99) and Isaac (lines 41-45), who suffered from social marginality as teenagers, enlisting in the military with complete strangers provided an opportunity to turn over a new leaf and have a socially corrective experience in the military.

***Military service as an entry ticket to Israeli society.*** Military service is typically used as a primary entry ticket to Israeli-Jewish society, says Itamar (lines 587-590). A person's military record provides information about him, creates networks and connections, and socially positions him, as Ricardo describes it:

*Let's call it a component in the social hierarchy. If I am a combat fighter, then I am worth more, an officer, an elite unit soldier. My wife's cousins served in Sayeret Matkal elite unit and they are very full of themselves, like alpha males, and they are very highly valued in Israeli society. For them to say they served there is a declaration of their identity, where they were formed as men (Ricardo, lines 235-238).*

Furthermore, military service provides not only social acceptance, but also public and political legitimacy. Lior thinks that in Israel's political reality, only military service can legitimize one's liberal and left-wing world views (lines 408-411). Furthermore, Ricardo, who considered a political career at some point, knew that it was military service that would allow him to be perceived as a legitimate politician (lines 41-43).

While altruistic motivations of serving and protecting their nation were in the participants' minds as they entered military service, many other motivations appear to serve their own interests and self-esteem. In a survey conducted among Norwegian soldiers expecting deployment overseas, similar motivations were found (Stabell, 2012). Out of eight

different types of motivations participants specified, the first seven were self-focused and only the eighth was altruistic. Thus, although the participants in this study may not be typical Israeli soldiers, it can be assumed that altruistic motivations, important as they may be, are not sufficient for an individual to be excited about his military service and that other, more personal, motivations are present.

Ricardo's considerations emphasize the important social role that military service holds for Jews in Israel (Horowitz & Kimmerling, 1974; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003; Schild, 1973; Sherer, 2004) and, more importantly, the implications of not serving.

### **Summary**

Most of the participants come from families with moderate left-wing political views, many of whom simply follow their family's traditional voting patterns of the Labour party and its political predecessors, with a strong correlation of this political orientation with the dominant sociological milieu - Ashkenazi, secular, middle-higher class and Social-Zionist. Belonging to this social milieu means having a sense of ownership and also social commitment and political conformism to Zionism, including rejecting any notion of conscientious objection.

While there was also a smaller group coming from a more right-wing political home background, all participants were brought up with humanist values and the premise that all human beings are equal. However, retrospectively, many of the participants perceive their parents' political stance and activity as naïve, partial, or inconsistent with these values.

Many of the participants became interested in politics from a rather early age, although levels of involvement and activity varied, in accordance with their self-confidence and level of maturity.

Among the factors influencing the formation of masculinity, the father figure plays an important role, as the son may develop a type of masculinity which corresponds with his

father's, either by resembling it or rebelling against it. Other factors that play an important role in this process are the experience of social marginality and coping with it, and the fast-approaching military service, which is in the background from a very early age.

According to the participants, in their masculine self-perception, men in Israel, by and large, try to avoid being portrayed as either effeminate or homosexual, as these are perceived as the opposites of manliness. Further, feeling attractive for women or having a girlfriend play an important role as self-reassuring components of masculinity.

Three main socialization agents are mentioned as significant to the participants' motivation for military service: family, school, and youth movements. Of these three, it seems that school and youth movements had stronger influences on levels of motivation for military service, suggesting that the peer group played a central role in shaping the participants' motivations for military service.

Alongside participants who felt socially accepted and popular as children and adolescents, there were others who had experienced social marginality. Despite being an unpleasant and challenging experience in youth, this positioning also provided them with capacities for critical observation and social analysis.

Most of the participants reached the age of joining the military rather motivated, with mostly patriotic notions of Israeli peacefulness and good intentions at the very least, and with the intention to do the best they could to some extent for altruistic reasons but also and more importantly, for reasons of self-interest and self-actualization.

In the next chapter, the period of military service as it is presented by the participants will be reviewed and analysed as well as the role that contact with Palestinians in their civic life played in the participants' processes of transformation.



## Chapter 6: Findings - Military Service

This chapter analyses participants' narratives regarding the period of their military service, starting with their enlistment in the IDF and ending in their decision to object. Additionally, it addresses the role of the participants' contact as civilians with Palestinians is in regard to its contribution to the process of transformation.

### Basic Training

Basic training is the first direct encounter of a recruit with the military, and is unmediated by any other agents. At this stage, which varies from two weeks to four months, depending on the future role of the soldier, the new recruits are supposed to be transformed from being citizens and individuals into becoming soldiers and organic members of the military. Tomer describes this period as a struggle to survive:

*As soon as you enter the military it is simply a struggle to survive ... these are very tough conditions of food, sleep and cold. I ridiculed it by calling us slaves but it has some similarity of slavery. I mean, you are uprooted with any sense of being human, you are on duty in some hellhole and when you are not doing that – you are asleep. It's not like you read a book, listen to music, watch football or play with friends. You are either asleep or eat or take a shower, meaning that you are just trying to keep your sanity (Tomer, lines 130-136).*

### Detachment from Civil Life

One of the primary experiences of basic training specifically but also military service in general is the isolation from the civilian environment. This isolation takes place on two levels: physical and moral. Physically, interaction with civilians is minimal and so the soldier is not aware of current affairs and, more importantly, their social significance for the wider society. Perhaps the most striking example for this was some of the participants' reaction to the assassination of PM Yitzhak Rabin. While as youths, many of them were

supporters of Rabin's policies and the Oslo accords, as soldiers they could not understand the meaning of the assassination (Isaac, 133-137; Nir, 339-342). Tomer describes his experience:

*The assassination of Rabin took place when I was in the settlement of Shiloh ... I was on duty for so long I was going out of my mind and as a result I entirely disconnected from being Israeli. I had a radio but since I was either on duty or asleep all the time, I didn't realize this was an exceptional event – I just followed my routine. Only when I spoke with my brother over the phone and I asked him about some basketball game did he reply: "What are you talking about basketball for? I'm telling you that Rabin has been assassinated" – then I finally realized what was happening. I had become completely disconnected (Tomer, 107-112).*

This physical removal and isolation has many implications, as Woodward points out (Woodward, 2005, 2011). It provides the military with the freedom and appropriate setting to shape its soldiers independently of any other influences, which might jeopardise this objective.

In addition to the physical dimension of detachment, Aaron also describes moral detachment, where political correctness or discourse about rights do not exist. He describes the process he witnessed as a cadet in the military academy:

*You take fourteen to fifteen-year-old people, teach them they have an enemy and the state has an enemy which should be eliminated – this is military jargon – you need to eliminate the enemy. And these kids don't need any further explanation – they develop alone their distorted world view. I remember that calling someone a leftist was worse than cursing: "son of a Druze", because we had a few Druze in the academy. It was accompanied with beating; it was a horrible curse word. Our*

*conversations were about “death to Arabs” – that was the topic, this was the type of discourse (Aaron, lines 221-227).*

Both the physical and mental isolation serve to foster and internalize the military set of norms along the lines described by Erving Goffman (1961) in establishing a *total institution*. Interestingly, in his typology of *inmates* and *staff*, soldiers, and especially new recruits, fit the category of *inmates*, in that “they have a restricted contact with the world outside the walls” (Goffman, 1961, p. 315) and that they are subject to their superiors’ arbitrary orders, leaving the recruits “with chronic anxiety about breaking the rules and chronic worry about the consequences of breaking them” (Goffman, 1961, p. 319).

### **Adjustment Difficulties**

Although for some, like Lior (lines 90-92), basic training was overall a positive experience, for most of the participants, it was very demanding and stressful. Dan (lines 97-104) says that he found the first encounter with the rifle very shocking and that it took him a while to get used to shooting. Yonatan (lines 82-85) describes it as an experience in which one switches to survival mode, both physical and mental. Gil (lines 105-113) found the hardest experience to be uncertainty regarding the game rules, about what is happening and about what is planned ahead. Itamar adds that while there were difficult physical conditions, the hardest for him was to endure the mental state they induced in him:

*[Basic training] was about doing all kinds of stupid tasks and assignments. First of all, the goal was to humiliate you and show you how small and insignificant you are. Run back and forth repeatedly; push-ups here, push-ups there; being punished for every nonsense; very little sleep ... I felt that I was strongly diminished and reduced. I enlisted as someone who wanted to be this big fighter – to contribute, to be strong, to be special – and the first thing they do is humiliate you. They tell you: “you are small and inexperienced” – you’re a rookie, right? “You are worthless, now you can*

*only follow orders". I had a very very hard time adjusting to discipline. I felt really depressed. Yes, yes, very depressed (Itamar, lines 112-127).*

**Personal distress.** As difficult as basic training was, most of the participants endured it and eventually found their place and felt better in the next stages of their service. However, this was not the case for all of them. Some of the participants describe real personal stress following their first encounter with military life (Uri, 109-119). Niv (lines 367-383) describes a melt-down experience during his training. He felt helpless, and that he just couldn't stand it. Yaron describes in detail his experience of basic training:

*What happened was that I joined the military and all that violence that I was afraid to face in action was already there at the training stage, because they really trained us to be like animals. This was my feeling. They teach us that our weapon is our best friend and when we shoot at targets there would be pictures of Arabs on them – pictures of men in Keffiyeh [traditional Arab males' head covering] on the target. And the language was extremely violent: "I'll fuck you" and "I'll break you" and we were treated very violently and I couldn't cope with it. It was really too violent for me ... and I didn't want it. I was depressed but I couldn't do anything (Yaron, lines 349-367).*

This personal stress, which several participants mention, resonates with the *mental and physical attrition*, found by numerous studies (Cigrang, Carbone, Todd, & Fiedler, 1998; Jordaan & Schwellnus, 1994; Pope, Herbert, Kirwan, & Graham, 1999). An important point, in this regard, is that all four participants who objected while they were in their mandatory service period reported tremendous personal stress, which did not ease with their time in service. It seems that although their objection was morally motivated, they had to experience acute levels of personal stress in order to follow up on their political reservations concerning military action, while for the others, even those who did not approve of Israeli

policies, it took much longer to ripen to the act of objection. This demonstrates the strength and effectiveness of the mechanisms in place, to prevent the incidence of conscientious objection.

### **Internalization of Soldierhood and Adjustment to Military Life**

Despite the difficulties and challenges, most of the participants managed to overcome these after a while. For some, being able to adjust and actually succeed in such a system was a very satisfying and rewarding experience, which also contributed to their self-esteem (James, 179-183; Sergey, 159-162; Itamar, lines 159-175). Isaac explains what made the military experience a positive one for him, once he adjusted to it:

*I think there are two elements which the military allowed me to express. The first is that I have a very physically active personality – some kind of basic aggression, which can be sublimated in sport. Boundless aggression terrifies me – I think I have much of it ... [but] the military tells you: “okay, if you channel your aggression into military work it will even help you, this is what is required”. So, there was this combination of discipline, which I was good at, and expressing aggression ... let’s say a kind of organized violence (Isaac, 109-117).*

### **The Importance of the Peer Group**

Starting with basic training and accompanying them throughout their military service, their peer group played an extremely important role in their adjustment to military service, say many of the participants (Carlos, lines 135-138; Lior, lines 100-104; Itamar, lines 129-130). This demonstrates the importance of cohesion of the military unit and how it is created and maintained (Ahronson & Cameron, 2007; Ben-Shalom, Lehrer, & Ben-Ari, 2005; MacCoun, Kier, & Belkin, 2006; Siebold, 2007). Later, as we will see, the peer group becomes the main social reference point, when the participant considers whether or not to object.

### **General Experiences from Military Service**

Military service is a very significant stage in personal development and maturation, say most of the participants. However, while some acknowledge the benefits and satisfaction they felt with their service, others have overall mixed feelings about it, especially as they look back at it from today's perspective.

#### **Positive Experiences**

Military service indeed enabled some of the participants to experience things they probably could not have face as civilians.

**Having fun.** Carlos (lines 128-131) describes parachuting as one of the greatest physical joys he had ever felt. Aaron (lines 649-653) adds to this some social skills and capacities he gained for life such as order, planning ahead and setting goals. Nir, who was assigned to a ranger unit, whose main assignment was to navigate, very much enjoyed this role and describes it as *“the best type of infantry service, as while the other units are maintaining heavy machinery and carrying heavy items, we were riding our jeeps, which was simply fun”* (Nir, lines 234-236).

**Assuming leadership positions.** Gil (lines 114-130) and Isaac (lines 142-150), both tank commanders in the armed forces, as well as Tomer (lines 82-85), a crew commander in the artillery corps, describe their personal and professional growth throughout their service and the opportunity to oversee other soldiers and take leadership positions as an extremely empowering experience.

**Intellectual and personal self-actualization.** For some of the participants, particularly those who served in intelligence units, their service was both interesting and intellectually satisfying. John (lines 82-85) describes the wider perspective that serving in an intelligence unit gave him on the Middle East and Jonny (lines 227-236) adds the feeling he had of actually saving lives in his position, despite not being able to talk about it with

anyone. Uri (lines 211-214) and Omer (lines 67-69) describe the technical challenge working with sophisticated technological systems, which to a certain extent, they followed up on in their later careers.

### **Negative Experiences**

Along with experiencing personal growth and satisfaction, some of the participants expressed their reactions to the inconvenience of military life. Carlos says:

*I really suffered on the personal level. I don't mean necessarily ideologically ... I simply suffered in the most basic sense of a guy who wants to enjoy life but is being told what to eat, and what to wear, and when to get up, so this is shit. This is the most fundamental thing. I wanted to be home, I wanted to be with my girlfriend, I wanted to have a beer ... I suffered because I didn't fit into this hierarchical structure due to my nature (Carlos, lines 119-126).*

Aaron (lines 381-384) found it very hard to cope with the violence and violent discourse he found in the military, and the limiting and controlling system he was subjected to as a soldier.

### **Militarized Masculinity**

When asked what would be considered masculine traits of men in Israel, participants typically describe them as “*Machismo, aggressiveness when necessary, command and control*” (Nir, lines 622-623). Yonatan adds to this list his inability to cry: “*I don't know how to cry. As a child, I used to cry. Ever since my military service I don't really cry. I think that to some extent I am a product of this thing [Israeli construct of masculinity]*” (Yonatan, lines 183-184). Aaron describes a similar process, which he underwent in the military academy. According to his psychotherapist, this process had made him tough and rough but as he was going through it, he lost some of his sensitivity for his fellow human being (lines 64-81).

Gil describes similar masculine traits but adds to it the component of sexism: *“I had never related to the common conceptions of masculinity I encountered in the military, like machismo and sexism, which you get in large quantities in the military”* (Gil, line 373).

Tomer emphasizes this aspect of sexism:

*I remember that there were many cases of sexual harassment in our battalion and I look at it differently today. It seems crazy to me that in an artillery battalion of some 200 male soldiers there may have been 12 women – girls, really. And someone would peek into their showers or the battalion commander would hang up the phone on his female secretary and then say to whoever is around him, “what an idiot” ... Let’s put it this way – even if the IDF was the most un-occupying military in the world, if I had a daughter – I wouldn’t want her to serve in the military ... sending a 19-year-old girl to serve with 200 male soldiers is inherently wrong* (Tomer, lines 590-597).

Yaron adds to this:

*In the military, I discovered a disgusting masculinity. The contempt for women is just shocking ... And I’m not even talking about sexual harassment... the way men talk about women and about scoring with them and if you are not part of it – you feel very lonely* (Yaron, lines 503-508).

And indeed, military service becomes very closely connected to masculine self-perception, as Carlos describes it:

*I see it with my young students ... They are awfully proud of going to reserve duty service or their mandatory service. Not only because they feel they are loyal and patriotic citizens, but also because they identify service as a component of their masculinity – being a hero* (Carlos, lines 315-318).

Isaac describes how, in a women-free environment, masculinity prospers:



[One of the reasons I felt comfortable in the military] *was that it was an environment with hardly any women. I think that many of my anxieties are related to women, I mean in high school. Such anxiety appears when you discover sexual desire and this was extremely difficult for me. So once there were hardly any women – there were only men – it made it much easier for me, socially speaking* (Isaac, lines 122-126).

Many of the experiences described of socialization into the military framework resonate with the concept of hypermasculinity, that is, masculinity which is typically extreme, exaggerated or stereotypical of masculinity (Rosen, Knudson, & Fancher, 2003). Hypermasculinity is very common in military frameworks cross-nationally (Keats, 2010; Taber, 2009) and this is not a coincidence. Apparently, military culture very strongly emphasizes male bonding, as it promotes units' cohesion, a central component in the military system. Thus, hypermasculinity is associated with compliance to the peer-group in the military unit.

One of the implications of *hypermasculine* perceptions and conduct in the military is that it prevents women's absorption in some combat units, as opposed to the declared policy of numerous armies, including the IDF (Rosen et al., 2003). Thus, *hypermasculinity* becomes a criterion for inclusion or exclusion in the military unit and in this way promotes *hegemonic masculinity*.

All of these notions of typical Israeli masculinity traits resonate with several notions related to masculinity. The first is a consistent finding that strong affiliation of men with traditional male social roles is negatively correlated with their ability to express emotions (see, for example: Fischer & Good, 1997; Hébert, 1991). This phenomenon indicates that male socialization strongly inhibits expression of feelings since in other studies conducted on six-month-old babies, it was found that male babies express feelings such as happiness and anger more than females (Weinberg & Tronick, 1992).

Second, sexism, sexual harassment and male aggression often go hand-in-hand, not only in military-related frameworks, but in other settings such as colleges and workplaces (Begany & Milburn, 2002; Forbes & Adams-Curtis, 2001; Russell & Trigg, 2004; Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998). This association of sexism and male aggression is aimed at preserving the higher status and social dominance of men over women. In the military context, most often women are subordinates of men in their military positions, which makes women extremely vulnerable to sex-based harassment and enables sexist attitudes to become acceptable and normalized.

**Ambivalent attitudes towards militarized masculinity.** There are many advantages to adopting a militarized masculinity. Uri (lines 544-554) describes its appeal as belonging, being socially accepted, and fitting into the hierarchic and macho-like military framework.

Additionally, and on an individual level, military service allows soldiers to express some masculine traits and reach their limits unlike any other experience, such as:

*Marching 60 kilometres with a sprained ankle, carrying a backpack, with weapons, and personal equipment; endure difficulties unlike anything I'd known before, marching 85 kilometres with heavy equipment and running carrying a stretcher ... Jumping from an airplane in the middle of the night. I wouldn't recommend these experiences to anyone but they are shaping experiences without a doubt* (Itamar, lines 594-598).

Military service has been extremely significant in shaping his life, says Nir (lines 612-615). More specifically, Gil (lines 370-371) refers to the ego boost that being a tank commander provided him with. Isaac tries to break it down and explain this ego boost to express his natural aggression legitimately:

*I have a very sportive personality – I have such a basic aggression, which undergoes sublimation through practising sports. Boundless aggression probably scares me – apparently, I have plenty of it – So [in sports] when you are able to express it without hurting anyone too bad – this was something I enjoyed very much. And it's the same with the military - if you channel your aggression into the military, it can help you, as a soldier. This is the preferred course of action. So, there was this combination of discipline and aggression, which I was very good at ... Let's call it organized violence (Isaac, lines 113-121).*

Finally, an important quality of militarized masculinity is the social cohesion and male bonding, says Yaron:

*What we call manly is also the concept of guys and this notion of guys who come [to reserve duty service] and have black coffee together. My battalion commander kept asking me if I wanted to give up this experience in the coming years [If I choose to object] (Yaron, lines 526-528).*

However, Yaron continues, this male bonding has a significant blind spot. While the group is everything and its members would go to a great length to help their peers, everything that is external to the group doesn't count, including human rights violations (lines 528-532). Thus, the decontextualized placement of military camps means that the only morality that will apply is the military one, which is the rationale for separation, exclusion and focus on obedience.

Similarly, looking back at them, most of the participants reject these masculine traits, as they consider them pathetic or morally negative. Carlos expresses his utter contempt for the Israeli militarized conception of masculinity:

*Today, retrospectively, I obviously despise it ... I despise Israeli men – on the macro level, obviously - because I think that the Israeli man is as helpless as you can*

*imagine. If one needs to hold a weapon and be violent to prove his masculinity, then he is as anti-manly as he can be ... I cannot stress it enough that whoever needs weapons and to behave violently, even if within the boundaries of law, just to prove to himself and the others that he is a man is pathetic as far as I am concerned, and it doesn't have anything to do with the occupation ... It's just pathetic* (Carlos, lines 309-324).

Male bonding has a very strong appeal, especially as it is accompanied by exclusive *old boys' club attitudes* and the privileges this entails (Farr, 1988). In the Israeli context, military male bonding reinforces what Connell calls *hegemonic masculinity* (Connell, 2003; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), namely hierarchical masculinity which emphasizes traditional masculine traits such as assertiveness, rationality and courage and that aspires to subordinate other males and females who do not share similar traits or do not belong to that *old boys' club* (Bird, 1996). This concept was challenged and criticized extensively but, nevertheless, it is widely used in feminist and sociologist writing (Demetriou, 2001; Donaldson, 1993; Hearn, 2004; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Rejection of such masculinity exposes the rejecter to social marginalization and labelling as homosexual or effeminate (Cheng, 1999), especially in small and close social frameworks such as a military unit. Thus, the participants' objection can be understood as conducted retrospectively, when their social reference groups had changed and they no longer need the approval of or fear sanctions from their former comrades. However, in real time, there is very little chance that confronting hegemonic masculinity from within the military system is conceivable.

**Sexual orientation and romantic relationships.** A key factor in masculine self-perception relates to a man's heterosexual orientation and his ability to attract women and have romantic relationships. Although none of the participants had identified themselves as

homosexual, a few mentioned the issue of sexual orientation regarding masculinity formation. Nir, for example says:

*I am completely straight – I tried to check myself and I am completely straight. I have no problem doing things that are considered un-masculine because I proved my masculinity [in my military service]. So, I don't know if it relates to the subject but this is what I'm thinking when you ask me about masculinity and the military (Nir, lines 615-618).*

In contrast to the common homophobia most men express, Jonny feels that fearing homosexuality is necessarily unmanly and that it eventually leads to a fragile masculinity:

*I am a man and a straight one. I also tried it – I said to myself that I owe it to myself to try something different. I remember times, even in high school, when I thought I may be attracted to men ... in my backpacking trip after military service I danced with this guy and then kissed him, being heavily drunk. But I didn't think of sleeping with him – I felt it wasn't for me. I did it out of curiosity. I just felt why not try it? Why is this such a great fear? I saw it as a great weakness of masculinity, which today I can refer to as gender related, that it is so dreadful being a man, because you constantly fear that... How fragile it is, masculinity ... I realized this when I was growing up and there were girls around me who kissed other girls out of curiosity, yet this never labelled them as lesbians. It was a sort of curiosity, a game, why not? And with men it's like oh dear... You kissed a man – that's it, you are gay, no other option – it's binary. And I wanted to question this binary perception and I said, why not kiss a man? What's so scary about it? ... But this fear that you might think that I am gay – I still have it. I think these patterns [of thought] are embedded in us (Jonny, lines 764-783).*

Being labelled as gay really implies being labelled as effeminate, the opposite of masculine. As mentioned above, Gil, who was shorter than his friends in primary school was called, mockingly, a *woman*. Since he was not very good at boys' activities, such as playing soccer or basketball, his sense of masculinity came from his relationships with girls (lines 498-508). And indeed, having a girlfriend seems to be very important in men's masculine self-perception. The absence of a girlfriend during military service, says Yaron, was his strongest disappointment with his masculinity during that period (lines 502-503). However, his act of objection as a reserve duty soldier, was a very significant component in his relations with his wife in its early stages. They were both political activists at the time and Yaron feels that being a CO had contributed to his appeal for her, which resonates with the argument that motivation to attract a mate is particularly likely to trigger non-conformist behaviour among men, if it serves this purpose (Griskevicius, Goldstein, Mortensen, Cialdini, & Kenrick, 2006).

Gil mentions that having a girlfriend, as he was entering his military service period, was the most important thing for him (line 99). But it is not necessarily having a girlfriend that is the important achievement. Rather, Tomer puts the emphasis on the ability to attract women as a central masculine component:

*I remember, to this day, this sentence by my literature teacher in high school. She was very intellectual and interesting and critical but I remember her saying: "I cannot help it, men in uniform are sexy". And I remember walking in the street with my uniform and rifle ... and I did experience myself as sexy or as a hunk (Tomer, lines 582-587).*

Levant (1998) refers to several implications of male socialization which promote emotional suppression among male adults. One implication he discusses is expressing feelings of empathy and compassion through sexuality and affection. These feelings may

explain, in part, the importance participants attribute to their romantic relations, in their masculine self-perception. According to this explanation, feeling attractive to women provides them with a legitimate channel to express themselves and their emotions.

In contrast, being portrayed as a woman raises social sanctions. Soldiers who struggle to be accepted as manly have the constant threat hanging over them of being labelled effeminate or gay, or both, as Woodward (in: Higate, 2003) and others point out. Here, again, norms of *hegemonic masculinity* ensure that no dissent is to take place and that unit cohesion is guaranteed not only through peer pressure but also through threats to soldiers' masculine social image.

### **Service in the Occupied Territories**

For most of the participants, the first stages of their transformation process began during their first experience with service in the OPT and with the Israeli occupation, as the actual people who are in charge of sustaining it.

### **Personal Experience and Self-Perception**

Actually being there and learning about the situation first hand was very different from getting all the information through the mass media, says one of the interviewees in an interview for a newspaper (Sil'i, 2002). He remembers telling his parents and siblings about what was really going on at the checkpoint where he was located and them being overwhelmed by his descriptions, as neither newspapers nor television reported any of the things he experienced first-hand. This experience made him face the actual dilemmas the occupation presented, and be more coherent in the stance he developed following his service in the territories. However, the process of transition was accompanied by many difficulties – emotional, cognitive, social and ethical.

**Quiet times.** For some, who had their first experience of serving in the West Bank and Gaza strip during quiet times (for example, during pre-Intifada periods<sup>28</sup>), their duty did not evoke any special dilemmas. Yonatan (lines 101-106, 134-140), who first served in the West Bank before the first Intifada erupted, remembers having in mind a humane and sensitive approach to the Palestinian civilians, but, in his words, he never had a consciousness of occupation, that is, any problems in the treatment of civilians was considered local rather than structural or systematic, stemming from the context of the Israeli occupation. Likewise, Tomer (lines 89-105), who served in the West Bank in the 1990's, as the Oslo process was under way, describes his time there as a passive presence with no special events. However, with the decline of the peace process and an increase in violence, other experiences emerged.

**Senses of fear, mistrust of superior officers and surreal reality.** One sensation Gil (lines 227-235; 256-257) remembers from his reserve duty in the West Bank is fear of a potential attack by armed Palestinians at the checkpoint where he was positioned, and knowing that he and his crew had no effective way to protect themselves against such an attack. What made this fear even worse was the soldiers' notion that there was no real logic in them holding that post and so the risk they were taking seemed to be totally arbitrary and senseless.

Itai (lines 97-109) remembers his service in Hebron as absurd, not necessarily because of any war crimes he committed, but rather because of the day-to-day routine and anomalies. For instance, standing at his post, fully armed, in the middle of a Jewish

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<sup>28</sup> Intifada is the Arabic name of the Palestinian uprisings against the Israeli occupation, which took place twice. The first Intifada started in 1987 and ended in 1993 with the Oslo accords and the second Intifada (also known as the Al-Aqsa intifada) commenced in September 2000 and concluded in 2005, with the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit.



kindergarten in Hebron, which was considered completely normal by both the kindergarten staff and the children, who grow up in this type of reality.

**Feeling as an occupier and oppressor.** Not surprisingly, however, the strongest impressions many of the participants remember from their service in the West bank and Gaza strip were the arbitrary power they had over the lives of Palestinians and their daily routine. Yaron (lines 300-316) describes how he felt like a “*policeman of the occupation*” standing at checkpoints, witnessing Palestinian houses being demolished and soldiers shooting Palestinians with no real restrictions. Tomer (lines 215-225) remembers how, as a reserve duty petty officer, he was ordered to command a temporary checkpoint, whose explicit goal was collective punishment, with his company commander explaining that the purpose of that checkpoint was to “*harass them* [the Palestinians residents]”, in retaliation for the murder of Jews at that point in the road some ten months earlier. The checkpoint he commanded, he continues, was not intended to filter or check the locals but rather to block the road leading into and out of their villages during rush hours.

But it was not just cases of explicit hostile intentions of the military which made participants uncomfortable about their role. One of the activities Nir (lines 180-191) remembers as making him uneasy was the random checking of vehicles: every shift he had to randomly check ten to fifteen Palestinian vehicles for suspicious people, weapons or other indicators of danger. This check included taking apart the cabin, including car seats.

The experience of serving in Hebron, says James (lines 185-190), did not remain merely an external experience for him. Over time he felt it was affecting him personally and taking over his conscience and identity. This state of mind becomes a new norm, which the soldiers are unaware of. Sergey (lines 182-185) says he only understood what occupation was following his service in the OPT, in daily contact with Palestinians.

For example, Tomer (lines 92-98) feels that some of his and his comrades' conduct at the time can be easily defined as looting: a Palestinian baker leaving them freshly baked pita bread at the checkpoint, receiving from Palestinians Masbaha (Muslim beads): was this acceptable for the Palestinians or perhaps did they simply not have a choice? Today he looks back at it as if he were a mobster with a gun laid on the table.

For Isaac, the experience of a reserve duty soldier in the West Bank, unlike during his mandatory service period, was an eye-opening experience, in which he started to understand the occupation and his part in it, as a soldier, as a process of the regimentation of the Palestinian civil population by the IDF:

*During this month, I spent, as a reserve duty soldier in the territories, I am trying to understand this [the occasion] for the first time, with a realization that something completely different is taking place, that this is not defence, which is the natural thing that a person within a state needs to do to defend himself. And this was the decisive month because then I started to connect what I learned and read to what is actually happening on the ground. I simply realized that the [soldiers'] job was about the regimentation of civilians, which had no security-related rationale and at that point I understood it was founded on racial segregation. This is what I saw. It was the first time I understood how the power base operates in this story, meaning that you have one sovereign power, which are the Jews. I saw it through the asymmetric relations between the military and the settlers versus the military and the Palestinians. There it became clear to me that this is a race-based form of control. Suddenly it became clear to me, while following orders, which didn't make any sense, that, for instance, every time there was a Palestinian attack, even far away from where I was, anyone who is an Arab would be restricted - either you hold him back or not let him go home – while everyone who is Jewish suddenly shelters under*

*your wings. This suddenly clarified it to me very concretely, also through other soldiers who were there with me, who complied with this. It made me understand there was something sickly here, morally speaking* (Isaac, lines 211-225).

Nir (lines 276-301), an infantry officer, made sure his soldiers didn't cross the lines and harass civilians, and those he caught doing so were punished. However, some of his former soldiers told him, long after their military service, that in his absence they did harass Palestinians just for fun, scaring them or holding what he calls "*frat boys' pranks*". But their ability to do so and get away with it illustrates the reality of occupation, in Nir's view.

**Social alienation from fellow soldiers.** The last part of Isaac's statement, namely the feeling that all his fellow soldiers accepted this conduct and regarded it as a normal state of affairs is a feeling shared by many participants, and strongly contributed to many of them feeling social alienation from their units. Yaron (lines 193-214) was labelled as a leftist in his company because he reported a petty officer he saw smashing Palestinian cars' headlights. This, in addition to his feeling that he cannot really share his doubts and difficulties on his missions with his friends in his units made him feel isolated and socially excluded at times. Jonny (lines 376-390; 716-720) also felt how friends from his unit could not accommodate the doubts he was developing and the political transition he was going through to the point that they both gave up on each other.

Isaac (lines 231-239) was astonished by what he calls other soldiers' blindness and even approval of unjust conduct. This took the form of both aggressive behaviours and acceptance of violent and racist utterances by extreme right-wing soldiers. He found out that even soldiers he considered relatively liberal regress to complete acceptance and approval of the militant and violent discourse (Isaac, lines 385-392).

Overall, it seems that participants were extremely shaken to find out what they had become, as they were going through their service in the OPT. First, they found themselves

policing and harassing civilians in a manner they found troubling. The social alienation from their fellow soldiers has two potential explanations. The first is that in line with Lévinas's suggestion (Lévinas, 1989; Lévinas, 2003), that the objects of their policing, namely the Palestinians, had become subjects in their view, making it hard for them to impose arbitrary measures they were required to adopt by their commanders. However, this explanation does not provide a sufficient answer to the question of what had made them, and not their peers, who were exposed to the same reality, consider Palestinians as subjects rather than objects. A second possible explanation that addresses the concept of *highly conscientious people* (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001; Witt, Burke, Barrick, & Mount, 2002), is that some participants had personal preconditions which allowed them to question their position and conduct in the OPT. Still, the question as to the causes of these preconditions remains unanswered.

### **Contact with Palestinians**

One of the hardest things many of the participants mentioned in their interviews was having to face Palestinian civilians (Yaron, line 343). As long as the participants could avoid facing them it was easier. For example, Gil (lines 167-173; 251-254), a tank commander, never had to face individual Palestinians in his role during his mandatory service period. In one of his few periods in the West Bank, his job was to make sure that the concrete blocks, which were blocking the entrance to Nablus were put back in place, after being removed by Palestinians during the night – playing “*cat and mouse*”, in his words. Being in his tank allowed him to always remain distant and avoid face-to-face confrontation, which he was always concerned about. Similarly, Isaac, also a tank commander, remembers how hard it was for him to stand at a checkpoint for the first time, rather than being in his tank: “*all of a sudden you have to stop people ... I was ordered to be a kind of policeman, to suspect people*” (Isaac, lines 159-173).

Except for standing at checkpoints, soldiers' duties in the West Bank also included late-night arrests (Yonatan, lines 172-175), riot control, which often involved chasing children and youths, who threw rocks on motorways and constant confrontation with civilians, says Itai (lines 137-145). Since their shifts are long and can be eventless, he continues, some soldiers initiated these confrontations so that time passed faster. But there were also more formal initiatives of the IDF to demonstrate its power and dominance. Nir (lines 138-161) recalls how, during Jerusalem Day (an Israeli holiday celebrating the unification of Jerusalem during the 1967 war) of 1993, his entire battalion marched out of its base in the West Bank into the streets of the neighbouring Palestinian village. He remembers wondering what is going on in the Palestinian residents' minds as 500 paratroopers marched through their village shouting left-right-left. He paid special attention to the incredible sense of power, taking part in a large crowd of separate people, who suddenly become one powerful bloc. On the personal level, Nir (lines 200-217) tells how bad he felt for the Palestinians as he was inspecting their cars or detaining them at checkpoints and how he tried to retain some level of compassion. In an interview for a newspaper (Sil'i, 2002) one of the participants told how he tried to help a Palestinian woman who was harassed and cursed by a checkpoint commander. He explains that he did this so that she knew "*not all of us are like that*", but also so that he would not take part in such conduct, which he found to be quite common.

The power gap and perception of Palestinians not as equal human beings is demonstrated in Nir's story of one of the many house searches he did in Hebron:

[During a shift] *we would patrol in the Kasbah, enter five or six houses randomly and search them, and that was actual occupation. Sometime between 8 pm and 2 am you randomly choose a house – completely arbitrarily ... You knock on the door: "Ifтах al-bab, Jesh" [open the door – it's the army] and you enter. During my*

*training, we occasionally conducted arrests. It is not a pleasant experience but at least there is a reason you are going to a certain house. Here, entirely randomly we would choose a house, all the women and children were in one room and we would walk with the man around the house, slowly taking the house apart ... It never occurred to me until once we entered a house and there was a woman who spoke English – I don't know if she was anyone's wife or a guest – with a British accent. She asked: "What are you doing here? You can't just barge in like this" but we could and we did. But the search was much shorter ... We understood her and she understood us. The Palestinians were so distant from us, we didn't really consider they were harmed by us entering their home. Once she spoke English to us and she looked western, it changed the entire interaction because it made her one of us, like we entered the house of our mother or our guys – I am saying this now, of course at the time I didn't see it like that – I remember our officer was very embarrassed all of a sudden. He came from an English-speaking home, so she was speaking his mother tongue and it was weird (Nir, lines 243-263).*

Here, again, once Palestinians are perceived as subjects, they are no longer transparent to the participants. Following Hoffman's *development of empathy model* (Hoffman, 2008), it seems that the process described here is perspective-taking, namely one's ability to change one's point of reference and imagine oneself in another's shoes. This could also have allowed the participants to see the Palestinians as victims rather than persecutors, which is how they are portrayed in the traditional Zionist narrative.

### **Contact with Settlers**

Apart from Palestinians, the other civilian population with whom soldiers had daily contact were the settlers, and while Palestinians are considered as the ones soldiers protect

their state from, the Jewish settlers are the ones who are protected, as they are citizens of Israel.

The contact with settlers had two different effects on the participants. On the one hand, some of them felt they could understand and even empathize with the settlers, although not agree or support them. Sergey (lines 98-116), for instance, organized several tours to the settlements for his group in the Mechina<sup>29</sup>. He remembers these tours illustrated for him the settlers' sense of mission and the meaning of their presence in the West Bank. Yonatan (lines 113-121) also remembers understanding the persistence of the settlers in Hebron and their attachment to the city and to the Cave of the Patriarchs. However, on the other hand, most of the participants felt rather alienated from the settlers. They regarded them as strange, racist or just crazy. Gil (lines 235-245) remembers the first time he watched, astonished, as settlers responded to Palestinians shooting at his post, guarding the entrance to their settlement: *"they come out of the gate, the girls started dancing and outside the gate, youngsters started throwing rocks on Palestinian cars"*. Itai (lines 127-132) also remembers from his service in the Gaza strip how settlers kept trying to change the status quo in regard to the Palestinians, for example by expanding their settlement's boundaries, while the military was busy, mainly functioning as the settlers' taxi service, driving them in and out of their settlement. Nir (lines 191-200) remembers his feeling that many of the settlers in Hebron were simply insane and James describes his experience there, in which he realized that the real job of the military was to protect the Palestinians from the settlers:

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<sup>29</sup> A pre-military service preparatory educational institute, which allow military enlistment to be postponed for one year, in order to widen the participants' knowledge of Judaism or other fields of knowledge (Mechina, n.d.).

*We found ourselves in this horrific situation, guarding the Palestinians from the extreme Jews living in Hebron, who are super-radical and super-dangerous. So, on the one hand I felt I was doing a service for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the guys who were with me – we were all there and a part of it – were shocked as we realized who we are supposed to be protecting. I mean, who are those savage and crazy creatures who stuck themselves in the middle of this enormous Palestinian city. It was hard ... Being there and realizing how things really are was a very strong blow for me and it was just growing stronger ... In one of our posts there was a new solar water heater [of a Palestinian household] and then an eight-year-old kid came and threw a stone to break it. He missed in his first attempt and I spent all eight hours of my shift standing there so he couldn't harm it – so he didn't. But as we changed shifts – bang! He was waiting there – he knew exactly when we were changing shifts ... So, I told him: “what are you doing?” – and he was just a kid, how would he know what he was doing... and the [Palestinian] person living there comes out and sees what's happening and this kid throws a stone at him as well. And this man is 75 years old. And I'm saying to the kid: “hey, what are you doing? This is an old man, what are you throwing a stone at him for?” and he answers: “he isn't a person. He's an Arab”. This is the kind of a situation that makes you say to yourself, what am I doing here? Let them eat each other alive and leave me alone. The constant feeling was that we are fighting a bitter war against the settlers whom we are supposed to be guarding (James, lines 227-236; 281-293).*

The hostility of the settlers towards Palestinians and their harassment under military protection was quite apparent for other participants as well (Sil'i, 2002; Shmulik, lines 119-129). However, the strongest impression of the participants was their realization that unlike the rhetoric that all people are equal, in fact the Jewish settlers were considered to have



higher values than the Palestinians – both by themselves and by the military (Nir, lines 331-336; Itamar, lines 229-232).

Thus, more than being angry at the settlers, the real problem was with how the system and the military perceived the situation. Itamar describes how this became apparent to him:

*I remember one night we smelled smoke, we saw fire and then we realized that a stand in the market had been set on fire and two little kids were dancing and singing – they were about fourteen years old - kids of settlers. They just set the stand on fire – we didn't see them doing that but they were standing there, singing and dancing and gloating. And then with all the stories I heard about settlers in Hebron, it dawned on me. I saw it with my own eyes for the first time, that violence ... and I see the helplessness of the law. I mean, let's put it this way, if those were two Palestinian kids who are setting a settlers' shop on fire – I have no doubt they wouldn't have been dancing and singing there fearing nothing but rather, they would have fled the place as fast as they could ... I mean, it illustrated this huge difference in how the system treats people who are labelled as the 'A' group and those who are labelled as the 'B' group (Itamar, lines 211-225).*

But for Nir (lines 384-406) it was not just a micro-level discrimination, which made the difference. As he was guarding settlements he realized that quietly but surely, they are expanding, with the silent consent of the military and the civil administration. At some point it struck him that the expansion of settlements are another means of warfare, which Israel employs to take more land, which it cannot or prefers not to win in direct military operation.

According to these descriptions of the settlers it seems that the participants' impressions of the people they were there to protect contrasted strongly with their presumptions. They found the settlers to be not merely victims but rather provocateurs and

violent people who do not share any significant values with the participants. Thus, according to the explanation of Posner and his colleagues (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982), and the principles of the PAST (past-attitudes-are-still-there) model (Petty, Tormala, Briñol, & Jarvis, 2006), It seems that their perception of the settlers was so different from what they expected, that the participants had to adopt new and more critical attitudes towards them and their own role as their guardians.

At this point in their life stories, it seems that rather than starting to feel empathy toward Palestinians, the participants experienced revulsion for the settlers – their supposed in-group members.

### **Post Mandatory Service: Civic Life**

As noted above, the great majority of participants objected only after (usually long after) they had completed their mandatory service period. While being subject to very strong disciplinary measures during their mandatory service, once this phase was over, the participants could much more easily reconsider many of their own conventions and paradigms regarding their identity, historic narrative, and most of all, where they could position themselves in the Israeli social and political scene.

### **Changing Context and Perspective**

A significant change in perspective was triggered for Sergey and Itamar, as they went overseas for their academic studies. Sergey (lines 386-406), who was politically active in Israeli-Palestinian left-wing organizations in Israel, says that the terms of his encounters with Palestinians changed when they occurred abroad. In Israel, as radical as his political activity was, any contact with Palestinians would still be affected by bias and inequality. Overseas, however, on the one hand he did not have any superiority over any Palestinians or Arabs he met. On the other hand, he felt much freer to express his true opinions without worrying whether he would be judged by other Israelis as an anti-Zionist.

Regardless of contact with Palestinians, Itamar, who studied in Switzerland, gained a broader perspective on the place of the military in society:

*If we look at the things that changed me - if there is something that deeply changed me - it's the several years I spent in Europe. Initially, I went to Europe for a one-year student exchange but ended up staying there for almost seven years altogether, at intervals. If there was any foundation for an in-depth change – that was it ... You see a society that doesn't function with a knife between its teeth, which doesn't live by the sword, in which the military doesn't function... and that was Switzerland, right? My friends in Switzerland – everyone was in the military except one who did civil service. It's not like I arrived at a place like France or Costa Rica, which doesn't have a military. I arrived at Switzerland and even there – in militarist Switzerland – suddenly you see an agenda which is not dictated by generals. A society in which the civic republican ethos is very strong instead of the ethno-religious ethos. An entirely different society (Itamar, lines 662-685).*

Gaining a European perspective provided Itamar with an opportunity to critically examine the Israeli convention of military service from a comparative point of view. It seems that the change of context allowed him to lower his defence shields and engage in transformative learning, according to Mezirow's theory (Mezirow, 2006). He could more easily reflect critically on the Israeli outlook on the social role of the IDF, explore other examples from different contexts of the functions of the military and discuss these with his colleagues in Switzerland in an open and non-judgemental manner. Since by this time Itamar had already objected, he was available to develop a more coherent and consistent world view.

## Political Involvement

Quite a few of the participants became politically involved after their military service. Although not all of them considered themselves as *leftists* or were already considering conscientious objection, their political involvement did contribute to their commitment to the political left wing, either Zionist or non-Zionist. For some, who were not strongly politically involved as teenagers, such as Dan (lines 183-193), Omer (lines 69-75; 115-135; 161-168) and Jonny (lines 478-500; 587-597) the trigger was their realization that they did not understand Israeli social and political realities well enough, and that they had some unanswered questions. This realization motivated them to start asking questions and become more interested in politics. With time, Jonny started writing political posts on Facebook, which initially were not concerned necessarily about with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but rather about socio-economic issues in Israel. However, as the views he expressed there were affiliated with the Israeli left-wing, he felt that more and more people saw him as a leftist, which he liked and embraced.

For others, especially those who had already been politically active as teenagers, their post-military political involvement was much more established. Carlos (lines 232-236), for instance, was the chair of the students' chamber on campus, which was affiliated with the Hadash party<sup>30</sup>. He dedicated so much time to his political activity, that he had to extend his undergraduate studies in order to graduate. Similarly, when Nir (lines 352-362) commenced his academic studies, it was very clear to him that he would be politically involved on campus. He became the leader of the Meretz students' chamber on campus, and an active member of The Association for Civil Rights in Israel. Both Carlos and Nir later

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<sup>30</sup> A non-Zionist left wing party, which was established by the Israeli Communist Party (Maki). Its main actions are directed toward promoting Jewish-Arab partnership, evacuation of all the OPT, workers' rights and social justice and equality. Currently, Hadash is the largest group within the joint list of the Arab parties, which joined forces towards the elections of 2015 (Hadash, n.d.).

became members of the political parties whose students' chambers they led during their academic studies.

Yet, for others, political involvement took place through human rights Non-government organizations (NGOs). Sergey (lines 355-364), who objected during his mandatory service, decided, once discharged from the IDF, that he wanted to contribute to society through volunteering in an NGO emphasizing Israeli-Palestinian coexistence. Uri (lines 358-390), who also objected as a mandatory duty soldier, dedicated his time to supporting and assisting other conscientious objectors. Later he became an advocate of workers' rights in labour unions. John (134-149), on the other hand, described a gradual process of trial and error, moving from NGO to NGO, each one of which was more politically remote from the Zionist stance than the other, until he found one whose political agenda he felt comfortable with.

It seems that what all these examples have in common is the search for consistency of values and political views and practices, in line with Festinger's *cognitive dissonance theory* (Festinger, 1962). Interestingly, here, the participants describe how they actively engaged in seeking for consistency once they realized that their values, political views and behaviours were incompatible and so they initiated a process of learning and cognitive transformation.

### **Contact with Palestinians**

Although the act of objection is supposedly carried out in solidarity, or at the very least, in sympathy with Palestinians, in fact Palestinian individuals are absent from most participants' narratives. However, when asked directly about significant contact with Palestinians, quite a few stories emerge concerning an important distinction between contact with Palestinians as children and teenagers during the participants' pre-military service, and

as adults in the post-service period. This section reviews these narratives, focusing on the impressions Palestinians made on the participants and the effect contact had on them.

### **Early Contact with Palestinians**

Typically for Israel's segregated society, most of the participants, as children and teenagers, had no meaningful interaction with Palestinians in their daily lives. If any, the most common type of Palestinian presence was that of service providers, labourers or construction workers, working on public sites (Yaron, lines 441-449; Lior, lines 61-70; Gil, lines 59-62; Isaac, lines 63-66; James, lines 21-30; Tomer, lines 8-12; Nir, lines 118-120; Dan, lines 67-80; Itamar, lines 64-73; Sergey, lines 52-63; John, lines 57-58; Uri, lines 143-146; Omer, lines 58-61; Jonny, lines 130-132; Carlos, line 98). Niv, who grew up in the Negev in the south of Israel, even remembers being repeatedly warned by his mother to keep away from the Bedouins living close by and so, he adopted a compatible perception of them: *"all of them looked the same to me, potential thieves, and I never spoke with any of them"* (Niv, lines 193-194).

Few participants remember family friendships between their parents and Palestinian co-workers or associates. (Yonatan, lines 161-166; Ricardo, lines 15-20; Niv, lines 179-184; James, lines 32-56). However, in most cases they did not maintain the contact as they grew up.

Thus, Israel as a segregated society, much like Allport observed (Allport, 1954), had removed any potential concern for violation of Palestinians' human rights by the participants simply because most of them had hardly any opportunity to encounter them as equal human beings.

Of all the participants, Shmulik (lines 66-117) makes one exception to a segregated childhood, which is important to mention as he comes from the most right-wing family

background of all participants. At the age of thirteen, Shmulik, a religious right-wing political activist felt the need to learn to speak Arabic. He says:

*I started to learn Arabic on my own. I bought a book and started learning Arabic and then wandered around the old city, to the [Palestinian] villages around Jerusalem ... At the age of fifteen I dropped out of school and then, for two years I went to tens – if not hundreds- of Arab villages in the territories ... I loved to walk around and when I found out that when you arrive at an Arab village as a fourteen or fifteen-year-old adolescent in the 1970's, people straightaway invite you to their home, to have a drink or something to eat, and, if it's night time – to spend the night ... This kind of thing was appealing for me. I was accepted very warmly ... At that time, the Yeshiva of Beit-El<sup>31</sup> was established and I was given the opportunity to join it and so I came to the Yeshiva and I used to study a few hours a day and spend the rest of the day wandering either in the nearby Jalazone refugee camp or in the surrounding villages. It became my way of life for a while (Shmulik, lines 79-95).*

At first, Shmulik (lines 105-117) continues, his motivation for this wandering was a national Jewish characteristic: *“that I am not afraid to go anywhere in Israel, – and it is my right to go anywhere I want to, and here I am staying at refugee camps and here I do as I please”* (Shmulik, lines 106-107). However, he says, he gradually started to absorb the Palestinian perspective, hearing people's stories about the war of 1948 and what preceded it, about their villages and their refugee camps. Then he came to realize that *“the historical narrative, which I was brought up on, is only partially accurate and that there is another valid story and the people telling it have their own entire world view, much like our own, which is built around their story”* (Shmulik, lines 111-114).

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<sup>31</sup> A Jewish higher religious education school in the settlement of Beit-El.

Thus, for Shmulik, an intensive interaction with Palestinians as a teenager certainly played an important role in the process of his political transformation and perhaps, this is what it takes to undergo a deep process of shifting from the right side of the political spectrum to the left. However, Shmulik's case can be regarded as the exception that proves the rule, in that almost all other participants did not have any significant daily interaction with Palestinians as children or adolescents. Additionally, it seems that even the very extensive contact Shmulik had with Palestinians was not sufficient as an immediate trigger for transformation.

**Planned dialogue encounters with Palestinians as youth.** In addition to, or due to the lack of, daily contact of Israeli Jews and Palestinians, several participants participated in planned Jewish-Palestinian dialogue encounters during their high school years (Lior, lines 61-80; Aaron, lines 231-276; Isaac, lines 63-66; Itai, lines 36-51; Tomer, lines 8-10; Gal, lines 101-103). For some of the participants, such as Lior and Isaac, these encounters did not leave any significant impression on them. For Tomer and Gal, these were positive experiences, generally speaking. However, when asked, they could not remember much about these encounters.

For Itai and Aaron, on the other hand, these encounters were very significant in the short term. Itai (lines 36-51), who participated through his youth movement in a peace camp in Cyprus with other Israeli Jewish, Palestinian and European youths, remembers this program as an extremely positive experience, although looking back he also considers it a naïve experience of a youngster thinking a solution is within reach, and that he and his fellow participants made a significant contribution to peace simply by being there. Similarly, Aaron participated in a dialogue groups encounter, which was an overwhelming influence on him. However, like Itai, the effect did not last very long:



*It was an exceptional experience because I had never met Palestinians before that and their narrative was so strange to me – I had no idea anyone could think like they did. You learn the same narrative for seventeen years and finding out that there are people who live close to you and think completely differently was shocking. I remember that at the end of the workshop I wrote them: “Your struggle is just and you must keep on fighting for it and for your rights and I am with you [in this struggle]”. And then I came back to my boarding school [in the military academy] and reverted to being the same person I was before the encounter (Aaron, lines 233-238).*

Thus, despite Itai and Aaron’s strong impression from the dialogue groups they took part in, in the long run they saw those events as neither mind-shifting nor as turning points. It seems that participation in planned dialogue groups as teenagers did not have a long-lasting transformative effect on the participants. Participation in the same type of encounters in older age individuals of post-military service, however, had a very strong effect on participants, as will be shown in the next section.

Planned contact workshops are still considered an effective means for the reduction of prejudice and inter-group biases (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). However, while the effect of these workshops has been found to be positive in its ability to reduce prejudice and improve out-group perceptions (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015; Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005), other studies indicate that with no ongoing contact, the main effect of prejudice reduction lasts less than six months on average, after which biases of both groups’ members revert to average measures in both societies respectively (Bar-Natan, Rosen, & Salomon, 2005; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005).

### **Mature Contact with Palestinians**

Contrary to their pre-military service period, contact with Palestinians later in life was highly significant. Except for Carlos (lines 98-116), whose Kibbutz was in close proximity to a Palestinian village, which allowed normal daily contact, most other participants lived in segregated areas, which, much like their childhoods, did not allow daily interaction with Palestinians. Thus, other platforms of contact were required to foster contact with Palestinians, and to provide both an appropriate setting and shared objectives for Jewish-Palestinian contact. The outcome for the participants of interaction with Palestinians in the post-service period was not only a positive experience, but also a profound transformation of the way they perceived Palestinians.

Three such platforms were mentioned by participants: the work and study environment, joint political activities, and planned dialogue encounters, similar to those many of the participants took part in as youngsters.

**Shared work and study environments.** Workplaces and classrooms provide a valuable environment for Jewish-Palestinian interaction and for growing friendships. Itamar describes (lines 378-405) how his random encounter with his Palestinian friend from his studies made him realize that he was on the wrong side of the power relations between the IDF and the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank. For Omer (lines 136-155; 246-252) working for an NGO on equal terms with Palestinian partners and co-workers made it possible for him to reflect on his social position as a soldier, a reflection he had never had to consider before this experience.

Jonny (lines 469-478) started his academic studies determined to meet Arabs and make Arab friends:

*I said to myself that until that point I hadn't met any Arabs, which made sense because of the natural segregation in the town I grew up in and in the military –*

*obviously not. But now that I was going to the university I felt I should get to know Arabs* (Jonny, lines 471-475).

And indeed, Jonny continues, a Palestinian student in his class became a good friend and he learned from her a great deal about the perspective of Palestinians in Israel (Jonny, lines 475-478). However, despite gaining one Palestinian friend, Jonny's overall impression of the university setting for Jewish-Palestinian contact is negative (Jonny, lines 523-527). He felt that although there were many Arab students at the university, there was still what he calls a "*voluntary segregation*", which meant that neither of the parties wanted to talk with the other or make contact.

But what is it that makes work or school friendship a transforming power? Two participants present possible explanations of this question. First, Gal (lines 673-693) talks about a daily and intensive interaction which not only led to friendships but also to the development of a shared identity affiliated with both the organization he was working for and the geographic area he and his co-workers shared – in Gal's case it was the city of Jerusalem (Gal, lines 436-451).

The second possible explanation comes from Lior (lines 180-187). As a musician, he became very good friends with a Palestinian musician during their studies at a music institute. The first politically shaping experience he remembers, regarding his friend, was when he was invited to sing at a commemoration ceremony for the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Naively, Lior suggested singing together with his friend at the ceremony a song named Song for Peace (*Shir Lashalom*)<sup>32</sup>. Lior was shocked by the amount of resistance from the ceremony's organizers to his friend's appearance with him. She was allowed to sing, but only in Hebrew. Lior cancelled his participation in the ceremony but this incident

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<sup>32</sup> This song became closely associated with the memory of Rabin since it was sung in the ceremony in which he was assassinated and later, a note with the song's lyrics was found in his pocket stained with his blood.

motivated him to become more politically active. It seems that the close friendship gave him the opportunity of standing in a Palestinian's shoes for a short while and experiencing how not only the Jewish state but also the Zionist left-wing, and supposedly liberal, sector patronizes Palestinians.

**Joint political activism.** Other settings which had transforming power over some of the participants were political organizations and joint Jewish-Palestinian action. Unlike shared workplace or academic studies, political activism does not provide the activists with benefits, such as salaries or qualifications. It has a broader common ground, however, at least in terms of shared values and common social and political goals. For Nir (lines 641-651), contact with Palestinians in the framework of his left-wing Zionist political party was not very significant in that he did not feel it made a strong difference to his political views or in his decision to object. However, for Aaron (lines 465-505), working closely with an Israeli Palestinian activist during an elections campaign provided him with an opportunity to get some real answers to questions he was struggling with, such as *“What makes people become terrorists? What would have happened if the situation were different [that is, if the Palestinians had won the 1948 war]? What is it that they are actually fighting for?”* (Aaron, lines 477-479). After spending two weeks with that activist, Aaron (lines 496-497) decided that he could not return to military service.

Tomer (lines 183-188) and Shmulik (lines 268-273) also mention the insights that working with Palestinian political activists provided them with. Shmulik (lines 268-273), for example, describes how he participated in Palestinian assemblies in Ramallah and East Jerusalem in support of the Oslo accords. He remembers his impression of Palestinian enthusiasm as completely genuine and sincere, which encouraged him to support these accords, at least during its early phases.

For John (lines 308-337), political collaboration with Palestinian partners was neither an easy nor a trivial step to take. At first his political surroundings mostly consisted of people like him, both in their opinions but also in their ethno-socio-economic background. However, with time, as he came to realize that Jewish political activists and leaders became “*aggressive and overbearing*”, in his words, he became inclined ever more toward collaborating with Palestinian activists, not only to promote solidarity but more importantly, because he realised that he could not and should not speak on their behalf.

**Planned dialogue encounters.** As mentioned above in the section *planned dialogue encounters with Palestinians as youth*, dialogue encounters did not play a long-term transforming role for participants who had taken part in them as teenagers. However, very similar encounters taking place later, during their post-military years, were highly significant for those participants who experienced them, as they forced them to confront the real issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as their own position on it (Omer, lines 200-207).

**Overcoming prejudices.** Aaron, who also participated in a Jewish-Palestinian encounter as a teenager, remembers his fear and his overcoming it, as he drove to a Palestinian village in the West Bank to an encounter:

*I remember driving to the first meeting in Tel-Aviv to the first meeting, I was really, really scared. Our group drove together in one van and when you enter the territories and passing the checkpoint and there are Palestinians next to you, in cars and walking beside you... And when you enter the village it's simply terrifying. Right away I started looking for Palestinian snipers, and working out how I could escape if I needed to, I was literally shaking. But then you meet these people and all of a sudden, I felt that the gap between my own fears and between the actual people I met there is incomprehensible ... This fear had accompanied me for a long while and on*

*one occasion we were pulled over on the road, a Palestinian man literally blocked our way and I was sure we were about to be kidnapped. But then we found out he was just trying to offer us Baklawas [Arab sweet pastries] (Aaron, lines 409-419).*

Thus, the first thing that dialogue provided Aaron with was the opportunity to confront his prejudices and overcome them, simply by putting fears of Palestinian hostility to the test and finding them unfounded.

However, this is not a unique effect that dialogue encounters have and in principle, both shared work and study environments, as well as joint political activism, may provide the same opportunity to test one's prejudices. In this light, what is so unique about dialogue and its transforming effect?

***Demonstrating the imbalance of power.*** Learning about the personal perspective is not enough, says Aaron, although it does evoke sympathy. "*seeing a person who was thrown out of his home and whose village was demolished, but it's hard to develop a comprehensive political perception of it without any additional knowledge about the political context*" (Aaron, lines 427-430). What can actually make the difference is that these encounters reveal and demonstrate, to the Jewish participants, the striking imbalance of power between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, says Isaac (lines 318-333). This total asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians is the main factor that drove him to object, he says.

***Connecting theory and practice.*** Lior (lines 189-202), a dialogue facilitator, had studied theories of social and political psychology at university. The dynamics he witnessed in dialogue groups demonstrated for him how the concepts of conflicting attitudes take form in real life.

***Ripeness for transformation.*** Ripeness played an important role in Jonny's openness in his encounter with Palestinians. Jonny (lines 523-587), who was disappointed by the lack

of interaction between Jews and Palestinians on campus, planned dialogue encounter was the ideal solution. Jonny felt that he was ready for the process of dialogue when he experienced it during his academic studies. He felt that his studies had prepared him for this moment: *“It was a very good experience and I completely embraced it and let it influence me – there was no resistance on my part, I was already over the argumentative stage”* (Jonny, lines 535-538). After the dialogue programme had ended, Jonny went to visit the group facilitators. He wanted to tell them in person that he had decided to object, as he felt they had played a key role in his decision. In their conversation, to emphasize the process he underwent, one of the facilitators reminded him that in the group’s opening session he said he was doing reserve duty service, and that he would continue to do it and that he thought it was important (Jonny, lines 544-551).

This point about ripeness for dialogue corresponds to a wider issue that was mentioned by several participants regarding the timing of the transformation process. Niv (lines 224-227) describes how after high school, when he went to the Mechina, suddenly his curiosity was aroused and motivated him to read and learn about things he was never interested in as a teenager.

Isaac (lines 526-528) feels that as he matured, he was more confident to examine and formulate his own views, with a decreasing need to rely on others or seek their approval. Similarly, reflecting on his days as a nineteen-year-old soldier on compulsory service, Tomer (lines 102-104) says it was only natural for him to do as he was told, without reflecting on what it means for a soldier to enforce military rule over the civilian population. As a twenty-six-year-old soldier, however, he approached this question differently with much more awareness that the orders he was given required him to engage in collective punishment – an order he would not obey. The age difference also reflects, the service conditions, says Tomer (lines 651-660). While as a compulsory service soldier he was

mainly concerned with his own survival within the military framework (getting enough sleep and food, completely relying on his fellow soldiers and so forth), as a reserve duty soldier, he was educated, lived as a civilian for most of the year, and was more mature. Maturity allowed him to give more independent consideration to orders, while as a young soldier he was simply not mature mentally or emotionally to reflect on them.

What is interesting about transformation is that it seems to operate within a window of opportunity. Aaron (lines 674-679) feels that the process he went through completely shattered his entire world view: the national narrative and everything he considered to be absolutely true. He felt that such a fundamental change in his beliefs, however, was less probable and although change was always possible, it would be built on what he already knew being incorporated with new knowledge, rather than the cancellation of everything he believed in.

In sum, contact with Palestinians played a very important role in the process of transformation, mainly by providing an opportunity to see how socialised ideas of identity and justice come into practice in real life.

The findings suggest that there is a window of opportunity or perhaps a stage in one's own identity formation in which individuals may be more open and prepared to engage in the required introspection and review their own beliefs in order for the contact to be effective. Why did participants find dialogue more effective in the post-military period than in the pre-military one? Evaluation research on the impact of planned dialogue does not normally compare age groups, nor does it consider age to be an independent or a mediating variable. The effect of participants' age in dialogue group encounters requires further research. However, other considerations may partly explain this difference of effect in different life phases of the participants. First, as noted above, participation in a single encounter programme has mostly short-term effects (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Rosen &



Salomon, 2011). A continuous interaction is required to sustain such positive effects over time (Bekerman & Horenczyk, 2004). For many of the participants, participating in planned dialogue in their youth was an exceptional experience in that no follow-up took place and no long-lasting relations were established. As adults, on the other hand, many of the participants sought ways to establish working relationships with Palestinians before, during and after their participation in the dialogue programme, thus enabling the effect to be sustained over time.

Second, relating to the integrative model of transformation presented in chapter 8, it seems that as participants had taken part in dialogue encounters as youngsters, most of them were still in their *naïve state*, which did not allow significant review of their national narrative and perception. However, as adults, after or while going through the stages of *destabilization* and *ambivalence*, participants were more open to reflection, and topics they heard and discussed in the encounters with their Palestinian counterparts resonated with the new information and frameworks of thinking, which were substantial at this stage.

### **Knowledge of Arabic**

One vehicle for transformation mentioned by several participants is acquiring proficiency in Arabic. Seven of the participants speak Arabic to at least a sound conversational level and a few have studied it extensively in their academic studies or through other opportunities they had. Speaking Arabic provided Niv (277-323) with direct access to Palestinians, and he used every opportunity he had to talk to Palestinians and get to know them. Similarly, Lior, Itamar, and Shmulik acquired high proficiency in Arabic, which allowed them direct access to Arab culture, writing and politics. Their stories suggest that learning the Arabic language, in addition to acquiring knowledge and critical thinking skills, can lower cognitive barriers to transforming their opinions and perceptions.

Indeed, the role of language in conflict-ridden contexts goes well beyond merely a tool for communication. It embodies culture, identity and power-structures, in the way it is used (Bekerman & Horenczyk, 2004; Fishman, 1989; Haarmann, 1986). Furthermore, Bekerman and Horenczyk (2004) argue that bilingual education (in Hebrew and Arabic) in Israel strongly contributes to improved attitudes of both Jewish and Palestinian students towards each other. Firm knowledge of Arabic becomes not only a working tool or life skill for the participants, but a promoter of transformation and understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Summary**

Clearly, military service was a highly significant experience for all participants, either by providing a positive confidence-building and constructive experience, or by presenting physical, mental, social and moral challenges which the participants had to face and somehow overcome.

Basic training, the first encounter with military reality, presented a strong challenge for most of the participants – one they employed different strategies to cope with, but also one that provided them with satisfaction and a sense of achievement as they managed to overcome the difficulties and prevail as they progressed through military service, become accustomed to it, and sometimes even excelled in their duties and roles. However, having developed the ability to adjust to the requirements of the military, many of the participants became fully aware of the arbitrary, hierarchical and blatant nature of military conduct, which they could neither accept nor justify.

Service in the West Bank and Gaza trip was very hard for all participants. Their memories from that period emphasize fear, a perception as occupiers along with increased sympathy for the situation of Palestinians, a strong sense of alienation from the settlers and the militarily biased policies and action. As soldiers, their position on the border between

these two civilian groups made them very critical towards the military and the Israeli occupation, although for most of them, not to the extent that made them reflect on, let alone consider, the option to refuse serving in the OPT at that point.

Contact with Palestinians was found to be more effective in the participants' post-military rather than pre-military period. This finding will be discussed later in the discussion chapter in the light of existing literature. However, already at this point, this finding can be explained by the integrative model of transformation. Based on my stage model, it can be argued that an intervention, such as a planned encounter with Palestinians, should meet participating individuals in the stage of *ambivalence* or towards the end of the stage of *destabilization*. Participating in encounters while in a naïve state seems to have very little effect on the long term, as the participants have not acquired sufficient life experience, to destabilize their world view and confidence in their national narrative.

The next chapter will review the decision to object, how the participants made their decisions and the consequences it had on their lives and outlooks until the present day.

## Chapter 7: Findings – Conscientious Objection and its Aftermath

This chapter focuses on the decision to object, how the participants made their decisions and the consequences on their lives and world views until the present day.

### Conscientious Objection

#### Considering Objection

**Awareness of the concept of CO before military service age.** Ricardo (lines 61-67), who as a teenager was a member of the non-Zionist Hadash youth movement<sup>33</sup>, was well aware of the option not to enlist in the IDF. In fact, he says, he personally knew at least ten members of the movement who did not enlist and he was quite knowledgeable about how it could be done. However, he chose to serve in the military for pragmatic reasons. As he was financially supporting his mother and sister after his father had passed away, he felt that objecting to enlisting and serving prison time with no income for the family would have been an irresponsible and inconsiderate thing to do. Gil (lines 222-225) remembers his high school teacher presenting two articles in class – one supporting conscientious objection and one opposing it. He remembers the option of refusal to enlist existing conceptually but as for himself – he never actually considered it and was somewhat critical toward those who did (Gil, lines 75-78).

Other participants, on the other hand, were not even aware of an option to refuse enlistment (Yaron, lines 23-25; Tomer 17-20; Uri, lines 148-151). Some say it may have been because they grew up in remote and peripheral areas, in which CO was taboo, unlike liberal Tel-Aviv (James, lines 551-569; Sergey 2-13). The only question, says Yaron (lines 23-25), was who would make it into a more combatant or elite unit. Thus, as CO was not an option for them, says Sergey (line 13), he never really had a choice about it.

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<sup>33</sup> A youth movement affiliated with Hadash political party, situated at the very left end of the Israeli political spectrum and affiliated with the historic Israeli communist party.

Thus, being unaware of the concept of objection and not knowing anyone who had objected prevented the participants from even considering this option. This demonstrates very clearly the phenomenon of *groupthink* (Janis, 1971), as the participants do not demonstrate an ability for free and independent consideration of the prospect of military service.

**First encounter with the concept of CO or with COs.** For several participants, one important source of information about conscientious objection was the media, where groups of objectors had published different *Conscientious Objectors Letters*. Tomer (lines 248-255) remembers reading about those objectors in the newspaper. Personally, he didn't think at the time he would get to that point himself but possibly, he continues, this idea did have a hold over him in the long run. Sergey also remembers reading about objectors in the media and at a certain point realizing that this was no longer a single phenomenon, but rather, that a mass movement was being created, through which making a political impact could actually be possible. This realization led him to considering conscientious objection for the first time.

Another way of introduction to the possibility of CO was getting in touch with objectors themselves. Uri started considering objection as a real option once he was introduced to a known CO from the late 1990's. Niv recalls his first encounter with COs and the curiosity they invoked in him, when he was on an Arabic course preparing for his military service:

*One thing that happened on that course was that for the first time I met a group of youths, who decided not to join the military. To object ... It was an interesting course, socially speaking. Twenty guys came to study Arabic before their service in the Intelligence Corps and there were four others – three guys and a girl who were our age and decided to object ... They came to the course with that decision ... I remember I found it intriguing – the fact that there were guys my age who had*

*decided not to enlist. This option never crossed my mind and I never encountered such people. Where I grew up I hardly met guys who didn't enlist in combat service, trying to make it into an elite unit or wanting to become as combatant as possible. There was something new and refreshing about it. In some way, I looked up to them, I might say. I really envied them. To me, it looked like something impossible, something I wouldn't do but which was very admirable. Unlike other guys in the group who got very upset that these people are not going to enlist, I was okay with it, politically speaking. It didn't upset me at all (Niv, lines 323-342).*

The encounter with other objectors, either directly or through publications by or about them, is a good example of *peer-enabled non-conformity* (Asch, 1956), when familiarity with other non-conformists makes it easier for one person to consider it for themselves.

However, not every encounter with COs was encouraging. James (lines 485-494) remembers an objector in his company who was harassed by other soldiers. Being witness to the social exclusion and sanctions that CO had suffered made James withhold his own views and postpone his own act of objection for a long while.

### **The Act of Objection**

Over time, doubts increased among the participants in a process that will be closely reviewed in the next chapter. The important finding in this regard is that no matter how gradual the process of transformation has been, a certain moment came in which the participants made an important decision – no more! The most important factor that played a role in this decision was that at this point counter-arguments to objection were no longer possible.

However, the ways in which this decision was implemented differed among the participants. Generally speaking, two types of objectors emerge from the interviews: the

confronter and the grey objector, namely one who looks for opportunities to be dismissed from duty or discharged from the military but without having to disclose the actual conscientious reasons for this.

**The confronter.** The first type of objector, the confronter, is one who declares openly his refusal to take part in a given military action or assignment or in military service altogether for conscientious reasons. In most cases the confronter is prosecuted and imprisoned for this action. For Aaron (lines 533-540) it was a matter of principle to openly declare his objection and go to jail. Tomer, in one of his reserve duty services, thought at first about just trying to avoid the checkpoint post, which he found immoral but eventually decided to object altogether:

*I was the checkpoint commander on one of the shifts and I simply felt ashamed. I mean all kinds of hard-working people approached and we blocked their passage, but they begged and said, “maybe the commander will let me [pass]” or “maybe he won’t let me” and so on. And it comes to a situation in which one of my soldiers points his rifle at a Palestinian and I get this feeling that I’m told to block the road but no one really cares ... I don’t know how I did it when I was a nineteen or twenty-year-old soldier. I suppose back then I wouldn’t object, had I had to do the same thing. At twenty-six, however, I felt there should be a limit to how much they don’t care about what they send us to do. They send us with orders, which is purely a collective punishment against Palestinians and more than that I am expected to lead the group— enough is enough. I remember that at first I thought – “okay, people are arriving at the checkpoint – just check them and let them pass” ... so I did it as some kind of a grey objection but then my company commander told me off and I said: “listen, this is a horrible humiliation” and that was it – at the end of that shift I decided that was enough, I refused to go on and went to jail. I refused to stand at*

*any checkpoint, not just that one. They did offer me not to stand at checkpoints at all but for me it didn't matter. If they maintained the checkpoint and didn't change the procedures then that was it – I didn't want to be there anymore. And that was the end of it – I was sent to prison (Tomer, lines 225-245).*

One episode that all confronters had to undergo was the trial, and specifically, when they had to defend their choice and state their political or human rights principles in front of a superior officer, who functioned as both prosecutor and judge. Yaron (lines 410-414) remembers his battalion's officer judging him, shouting at him and becoming irate. He referred to it as a show trial, where a verdict was reached before the trial actually started. Carlos (lines 181-187), Isaac (lines 276-280), and Sergey (lines 234-275) had similar experiences of threats of more severe punishment than the standard imprisonment time of twenty-eight days, being shouted at or simply being treated rudely. Some others remember very engaging conversations, with the judging officers trying to convince them to change their mind (Itai, lines 219-225; Itamar, lines 473-504). Gal describes his trial:

*I was tried by an older reserve duty officer who really wanted to talk about it. You could see he was intrigued and that he was not coming from a superficial or a militaristic or defensive, angry stance but rather as if this was personally challenging him and he wanted to talk about it. So, we started talking – and this is all in a situation of a trial ... and he started presenting counter-arguments which I knew well from home ... and I told him: "listen, you sound like my dad. I know what you mean and I know where you are coming from but this is a different thing I'm trying to show you" and he said something which he asked me to forget: "I can see what you are saying, even sympathize with it more than I sympathize with the government's position, but..." and the but he kept coming back to was that this was the military and these are the orders so this is what I need to do and if I don't – there*



*will be consequences and a price to pay. And at some stage I told him: "okay, I think we reached that stage when you do what you have to do and I do what I have to do" and that's what happened* (Gal, lines 593-606).

Thus, either as an intimidating or a more comfortable experience, the trial presented confronters with the ultimate challenge of defending their positions (often newly acquired ones), and facing certain imprisonment sentences. Ironically, the stronger case they made and the more persistent they were in arguing it, the higher were the chances they would get jailed, even though many of them were also offered an opportunity to change their minds (Carlos, lines 11-187; Itamar, lines 497-501; Sergey, lines 272-275). It seems therefore, that the trial marked *a point of no return* in the confronters' personal narratives.

The confronting COs demonstrate some similarities with social rebels (Jetten & Hornsey, 2010). They followed their conscience regarding what they perceive as the common good, while being willing to pay the price for their beliefs (Packer in: Jetten & Hornsey, 2010). However, this does not mean that confrontation with the military system was enjoyable for all of them, as some experienced considerable stress, as they faced the prospect of confrontation.

**The grey objector.** Unlike the confronters, it seems that the grey objectors, namely those who found non-confrontational ways to avoid service in the OPT or altogether, were quite reluctant to confront the system in the name of their ideology or political stance. However, the trigger for them to look for a way out was clearly ideological. Ricardo (lines 118-124) describes how he once pretended to be sick in order to avoid an assignment in the OPT, during which he knew he would have to deal with the Palestinian civilian population. Similarly, James (lines 395-421; 453-464) found a way out, as he was discharged for anxiety attacks and for being generally mentally unfit for military service, as a combat reserve duty soldier. Gil describes how he got away with grey objection:

*And then, before operation Cast Lead [also known as the Gaza war] they called me to practice and at the training base they built a model of a Palestinian city to practice on and then it dawned on me that an operation was being planned. I remember the chief of staff arriving with his entourage so obviously, there was something ... And I already knew about politics, and this was the stage when I really struggled to make up my mind ... And it went back to the thought that in principle, I would love to make an ideological move but then again – obviously, that with everything that was going on in Gaza, it was not the same as with the West Bank, of cruel maltreatment of civilians in the context of the occupation. But I do know that it seems to me completely unnecessary, that it is entirely political and that the only thing that can happen there is that I either hurt someone or get hurt myself, both of which I have no interest in. But the question is how I get out of it without hurting my family. But the matter played out quite easily for me because, although I am very stressed and can't stop thinking about what to do, in practice, when I get the phone call to check in to my unit, after some hesitation I am calling my company commander, blaming it on my wife – saying she is anxious and terrified - and he says it's fine because as it is, everybody else is extremely enthusiastic about coming and recruitment rates are very high so I don't spoil anything and I don't need to come ... And that was it. It was somewhat cowardly. I never bravely faced the system and said: "I don't take part in that" (Gil, lines 421-444).*

Thus, the grey objectors, although paying no price, express, either implicitly or explicitly, some wish that they had stood up to the system for their values, rather than using other excuses and not actually expressing their real motivation.

**Political or personal CO.** The choice to object and its consequences are entirely personal and take place after a long individual process. However, an important question is

whether the act of objection was political, that is, meant to affect the reality and be adopted by other people, or if it is a personal choice of a person who simply feels it is wrong for him to take part in the occupation, without having any agenda to end the occupation as such.

James (lines 469-494), for instance, became a CO as a personal act against violence and because he felt he does not want to bear arms and hurt other people. However, most of the other participants referred to their choice as purely political, aiming to create a mass popular movement to end Israeli occupation. For Carlos (lines 246-260) and Gal (lines 535-541) it was important to make the point that their objection was an ideological and conscientious statement. Carlos continued that he feels that both personal and political objections go hand in hand and that separating them is missing the point. Nir (lines 528-538) refers to his objection as political in that it was an action he took because he thought it was universally correct, in line with Kant's categorical imperative and so he did what he thought "*every decent person needs to do in these circumstances*" (Nir, line 536).

Regarding the importance of the political movement of the COs, Yaron (lines 335-340) remembers how proud he was to take part in the objectors' movement of Courage to Refuse and take both political and moral stances and Jonny (lines 727-732) speaks about his political commitment to the COs letter he was one of the initiators. However, today, Itai wonders if this was the wisest way to promote his political agenda:

*Today, I am still very determined in my political opinions and how I think we should end the conflict, but I have many questions about whether we really succeeded in this action – how effective it was ... I don't regret this act, what I did. I'm only asking myself if the course I had taken eventually achieved the goals which [it aimed at] ... I took part in a movement that aspired to change the situation. It wasn't just objecting because I didn't want to serve in the territories. It was about objecting because I think this was an important step I needed to take to resolve this conflict.*

*And looking back I have my doubts – I don't have answers. But if as a twenty-something-year-old objector there was no room for asking these questions – today I'm in a different place ... I think it brought about much antagonism [to the cause]. Like with Breaking the Silence and all of that – I do think it is an important organization but do they make the right strategic choices? I am not so sure (Itai, lines 276-293).*

The importance of a social reference group is clearly evident here, especially as the objection is perceived as a political statement and not just a personal step to clear one's own conscience. Either in the form of *an alternative moral community* (Anderson, 2006; Bernstein & Tutu, 2013; Opatow, 1990; Opatow et al., 2005), which would endorse objection or a new peer-group, which would participate in the act together.

**The act of objection as a manifestation of masculine traits.** As mentioned previously, sixteen of the participants in this research declared that they refused to serve in the OPT or in the military altogether for moral reasons, often while confronting their superior officers. The other seven found other ways to avoid service, an act which is also referred to an *Indirect Objection*. The act of confrontation with the system, as part of the objection, manifests masculine qualities of courage, honesty and endurance, says Yaron (line 499) and explains:

*Because at least you are not a coward, you are facing it [the consequences]. I think they [my family] appreciated my objection better. I mean, they would have never appreciated indirect objection ... but they would prefer it if I refused and did time in jail, but not talk about it in the media. Not washing your dirty laundry in public, not externalizing your criticism – it must be also a masculine trait (Yaron, lines 523-526).*

Itamar adds to Yaron's description the qualities of sincere, clear and direct communication, as well as setting boundaries, as manifestations of masculinity in the act of conscientious objection (lines 612-619). The fact that COs hold direct objection in high regard occasionally creates strange and awkward situations, such as the one Carlos describes:

*So, we were overseas for 5.5 years and then we came back and I went to register at the Adjutant Corps and you know, I think this is something that characterizes most objectors, at least those I know personally. Due to the ideological and political significance of objection we avoid doing anything that is not related to this specific reason for objection ... to emphasize that we are not mere troublemakers, namely that this is something very substantial for us politically, ideologically and conscientiously. So, when we came back I intentionally went to the Adjutant Corps to announce that I was here ... It was important for me to let them know I was here so that they wouldn't think that I was just trying to avoid service – that I would object but not avoid ... So, on the same occasion I said that I was here but I also declared that I refused to serve altogether – wherever they sent me, I would not wear the uniform (Carlos, lines 246-264).*

In Itai's social and political circles, on the other hand, he was highly appreciated for the act of objection, giving him an ego boost and a sense of machismo (lines 323-332).

Tomer elaborates on this glorification of objectors:

*In my social circles, I think that objection was perceived as a heroic act ... it was considered sexy ... And I remember that this was how we framed ourselves – as soldiers, fighters, Zionists, patriots, who decided to object (Tomer, lines 601-606).*

Sergey agrees with Tomer's description and argues that objectors who use their military background to justify their objection are not challenging the unjust social reality in

Israel, but rather preserving and reproducing the Israeli order in which military service provides the legitimacy to become a political subject rather than object. He still believes that any kind of objection presents a challenge to the social and political order but thinks that there might be better ways to do that (lines 431-434).

The confrontational act of objection serves as a *hypermasculinity* trait (Rosen et al., 2003), except that here, it is used for the opposite purpose – turning away from violence rather than promoting it. The level of transformation described here is limited to the cognitive level of changing attitudes toward military service in the OPT, while maintaining masculine perceptions of confrontation. Sergey's criticism of this common reasoning of confronters presents a different option: to object not only to the specific issue of service in the OPT, but rather, to see it as a facet of *hegemonic masculinity*, that needs to be challenged as well.

***Rebellious nature.*** A typical trait which many of the participants identify with is being rebellious. On the one hand, quite a few participants, such as Isaac (line 106) describe the discomfort and even anxiety that confronting the military system evoked in them. On the other hand, however, Isaac thinks that on an unconscious level, rebellious actions pleasure him, namely they satisfy some kind of psychological need (lines 482-484). Uri (lines 98-128) describe himself as rebellious in his nature and James elaborates:

*At some point [in my service] I couldn't participate any longer. I have broken the conventions like I always do ... I know today that I love to check the boundaries and I don't like being part of a system. I know very well - perhaps I learned it in the military – how to be part of a system but I just don't like it and I don't like having rules around me, especially if they make no sense* (James, lines 205-210).

The notion of *rebellious nature* suggests that in addition to having an intrinsic *idiocentric* orientation, certain individuals, such as Isaac and Uri, are capable of setting

goals only by abiding by their internal standards and values (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Yamaguchi et al., 1995). However, even if they are capable of this, it did take them some time to find the inner strength to follow up these goals with action.

### **Consequences and Implications of the Objection**

**Experiences in prison.** Imprisonment, the ultimate punishment for COs in Israel, is a strong deterrent measure for objectors, especially when objecting for the first time (Carlos, lines 187-190). The treatment that COs receive in military prison differs dramatically between reserve duty and compulsory duty soldiers. For reserve duty soldiers, despite being deprived of basic freedom and subjected to humiliating conduct, such as prisoners' head count, they didn't feel they were targeted or exceptionally harassed by the wardens and they usually adjusted to the situation quite easily (Yaron, lines 418-425; Itai, lines 226-228).

Carlos tells about his experience:

*I was the first objector to be imprisoned and I was scared because it was Jail No. 4 in my first term. This jail is for - how should I put it – not very nice people. Everyone shared the same huge hall – 100 bunk beds in one room. And there were some pretty heavy offenders – people who did time for drug pushing – not very nice things. Luckily for me, since I was one of the only ones who could read and write there, I would write their appeals for pardon ... The big boss of the prisoners there was an actual mobster so he gave me his protection and I knew I was safe as I was writing the appeals for him and his friends ... The second and third times there were ten of us and this, of course, changed everything. Each time I was there I was still a student and actually they were very considerate. They let me be in charge of the library, since you need to work in prison, so they told me: “you’ll be in charge of the library and you can sit and study there” ... Each morning I would go to the library,*

*tidy and clean it up and then sit and read the entire day ... And you make contact with the other COs. It was even kind of nice (Carlos, lines 187-195, 219-225).*

Other COs were treated very similarly, and all say how much easier it was for them being imprisoned with other COs (Yaron, lines 418-425; Isaac, lines 282-291; Itai, lines 226-234; Tomer, lines 275-281; Gal, lines 613-640). Although certainly not a pleasant experience, none of the reserve duty objectors experienced his prison time as a traumatic experience which would prevent him objecting again in the future.

For compulsory service objectors, on the other hand, prison time was an entirely different experience. Niv (lines 450-451) simply refused to talk about that time. Aaron was willing to describe his experiences of military prison and confinement, which appeared to be extremely challenging and traumatic:

*Prison was a very very bad experience. Very humiliating. I mean, the experience of being jailed is hard as it is – an awful experience when they deprive you of your freedom. In your military service, you don't experience it to that extent, but in jail you know you are in jail. In the military, you somehow feel that you chose to be a soldier but in jail you are in jail, either you want it or not, and let's say that while in regular prisons there is a spectrum ranging from deterrence to personal development - meaning going through some sort of a positive process with the prisoners – military prison is strictly about deterrence. Every day you stand for hours in the sun; you are pushed around all the time; you have to run from place to place; you are being humiliated; you can't talk most of the time; every little thing you do that the wardens don't like, they threaten to put you in solitary confinement, which is an awful place ... After these thirty days, I realized that I was going to try and get discharged on the grounds of mental incapacity. I went to a psychiatrist to ask for a letter and I went back to prison. In prison, after I had a letter from the*



*psychiatrist, they put me in confinement, supposedly to prevent me from committing suicide ... confinement is a two-by-three meter room - mouldy all over. You have this concrete bench you can sleep on. There is no one in the room with you except someone – occasionally they put people with you to keep you from committing suicide. You can't take books with you or shoelaces, so you don't have anything to do there. The walls are painted black so it's awfully hot and there's a projector that's turned on 24 hours a day. You cannot sleep – if you fall asleep they beat you up. It's a place people just go mad in ... it's a place that is not documented, not recorded, that the military somewhat denies exists. It's hell. I was there for ten days. One of the things that kept me in there was knowing that it would help me get discharged. I don't want to think how it would have affected me had I no goal because it's just a horrible place (Aaron, lines 550-586).*

From the participants' stories, it seems then, that the IDF makes much more effort to deter compulsory service soldiers than reserve duty ones and that peer support plays a very important role in making prison time a more tolerable experience for the COs.

**Responses from relatives and friends.** Although families of the participants did not always support their action nor did they agree with it ideologically, most often they did support them emotionally (Yaron, lines 375-379; Itai, lines 203-206; Tomer, lines 267-271; Gal, lines 642-649; Uri, lines 293-300; Jonny, lines 696-716). Yaron (lines 387-395) feels that compared to other people, his family appreciated the fact that he was willing to pay for his ideology and this made even family members who disapproved of his political stance appreciate his willingness to stand by his beliefs them.

When it comes to friends and, more importantly, fellow soldiers, the responses were more diverse. On the one hand, several participants were surprised to get support from some of their peers (Yaron, lines 417-418; Aaron, lines 636-644; Tomer, lines 257-259; Gal, lines

213-214). However, in other cases, friends and peers were very disapproving of the choice to object (Yaron, lines 414-416; Nir, lines 558-561). Ricardo (lines 200-211) remembers how he was physically threatened by soldiers in a unit of paramedics he was supposed to train, merely because they found out about his left-wing political views – without even mentioning the issue of conscientious objection. Eventually, he had to ask to be transferred from working with that unit, as he felt he was in danger. Gal (lines 209-213) remembers some hard exchanges of words with friends around his objection. With one of them - a very close friend – he felt at a certain point that both of them were “*standing on opposite side of a chasm*” (Gal, lines 425-426) which could not be bridged and eventually their friendship did not last.

Quite a few of the participants experienced a similar process of social convergence, by the end of which their closest social circles consisted mostly of like-minded people – politically, ideologically or identity-wise (Tomer, lines 507-532; Jonny, lines 733-736; John, lines 361-388; Omer, lines 296-315). Itamar (lines 54-62) feels that by and large, he hardly has any friends whose political opinions are considerably different from his own. Shmulik (lines 351-361) feels the same. He explains this by his reluctance to constantly argue with people, which he feels would be the common dynamic he would have with right-wing friends.

Thus, the path that the participants took of objecting and taking a rather radical left-wing political stance also had, for many of them, social implications, of changing their social circles from those that rejected them to those that accepted and approved of their political opinions and activity.

This point is highly significant for the notion of transformation, since the transformative process was, at the end of the day, a path that each of the participants had to walk on his own. In some cases, individuals would encounter others taking that path and at

the end of it there was a moral community willing to absorb them, but the process itself was individual in its nature. Thus, models of transformation such as the *transformative learning model* (Mezirow, 2006) or *development of empathy theory* (Hoffman, 1977, 2008) are entirely personal, which may explain why only few people go through the entire process of transformation: some may stop at some point before taking action and others choose not to experience it at all.

**Formal and informal sanctions and prices paid.** Although COs are completely marginalized in Israeli society and delegitimized by all Jewish Zionist parties, surprisingly, most of the participants don't feel they were sanctioned, either formally or informally, in their civilian lives (Yaron, lines 403-406; Isaac, lines 367-375). However, there are a few exceptions to this rule which are quite surprising, as they actually took place in academic settings, which are normally considered to be a safe haven for Israeli left-wing activists. Carlos (lines 230-231), who used to teach in a pre-academic studies school of a major university was about to be fired by the head of the school when she found out he was a CO. Only the support of other lecturers prevented him being fired. Similarly, Nir (lines 553-558) who was working as a tutor in a special university programme teaching law to gifted high school students was about to be dismissed for the same reason. Eventually he managed to keep his job, as he was not employed by that high school but rather by the law school which supported him.

Shmulik, a professor in the humanities, describes how he found out the real reason why his tenure was delayed:

*I finished my PhD studies in 2003 but was offered a position only at the end of 2010. Only after I got the position did I find out that there were three professors in my department, who retired during those seven years, who said that I would not get into the department as long as they are alive. I didn't know about any of this. I have*

*written four books, two of which were published by Berkeley, according to academic standards – but when other people got positions I always said it was because they are worthy and that I didn't think that politics had anything to do with these decisions* (Shmulik, lines 403-421).

### **Where They are Today**

What is the end-point or, at the very least, the aftermath of the transformative process which the COs have gone through? What difference did it make to their social and political identities? What are their political and ideological positions? How politically active are they still after all these years and how do they perceive the future of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

### **Identity, Ideology, and Political Views**

Identity is an anchor which is very hard to let go of, says John (line 190). Even as a radical left-wing activist, he still feels, with a certain sense of shame, that he holds on to his tribal identity of middle-higher class secular Ashkenazi Jew in Israel, who opposes the settlements and enjoys the privileges of the dominant social group. Because this identity is such a strong component in life, it is easy to understand how painful it was for Gal (lines 438-466) to part from his former fully mainstream Israeli identity: *"It's like something in your brain's chemistry changes, you are torn apart from parts of you that you cannot have anymore"* (Gal, lines 442-443).

According to *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and *integrated threat theory* (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Bizman & Yinon, 2001) respectively, one's identity in a situation of conflict is a means to either improve one's self-esteem through the individual's in-group's social values, or to reduce the threat, or the perception of threat, posed by out-groups. Realizing that neither function was needed, the participants had to engage in self-examination and re-evaluation of their own identities.

This does not mean that all of them reached the same conclusions. In the paths they took, leading them from the Israeli consensual political mainstream to becoming COs, different participants went to different lengths and in different directions. In what may seem contradictory to *cognitive dissonance theory* (Festinger, 1962), many of the participants adopted pragmatic stands and remained within the boundaries of Zionism and a Zionist identity, while others adopted critical positions regarding Zionism.

**Attitudes toward Zionism and political positions.** The CO movement, Courage to Refuse, identified itself as Israeli, Zionist, and combatant, says Ricardo (line 179), implying that given the circumstances, objecting to serve in the OPT is the Zionist thing to do rather than a challenge directed at the Zionist idea. Here the idea is that Jewish people are a national group, and entitled to a sovereign nation state in the same way other nations are, says Nir (lines 505-507). This cannot justify the Palestinian Nakba<sup>34</sup> nor Israel's treatment of Palestinians, he continues but "*the Jews also deserve to have their Imagined Community in sovereign borders*" (Nir, lines 524-525). Similarly, Gil (lines 336-357), who also considers himself a Zionist, reinforces the Zionist state from a particular angle. Although he completely rejects the idea of a bi-national state, he feels that his perception and motivation for a two-state solution has shifted over the years to a more empathetic, collaborative, and integrative approach:

*One of the ways in which I changed was progressing from the concept of we are here and they are there, which I identified strongly with in the 1990's, to a sense that we need to have an interest in the prosperity of a Palestinian state, of the Palestinian*

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<sup>34</sup> The Arabic term for the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948, when during and following the war between the Jews and Palestinians in mandatory Palestine, which was followed by military clash between Israel and its neighboring Arab countries, 532 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed and more than 750,000 Palestinians became refugees ("al-Nakba: the Palestinian "Catastrophe", " n.d.).

*community and we need to promote this interest through collaboration, if we want it to be sustainable* (Gil, lines 349-352).

When asked about his identity, Shmulik (lines 297-313) has mixed feelings on this issue. On the one hand, he has a strong sense of being Israeli and Jewish. On the other hand, or perhaps because of that, he feels a strong obligation to make the other narrative accessible for Israeli Jews. Thus, having a strong Jewish-Israeli affiliation, he is able to experience the Palestinian point of view and at the same time, be secure in his own identity.

On the other hand, quite a few of the participants have critical views of Zionism and no longer identify as Zionists. Objecting as a soldier, says Yaron (lines 484-497), who took part in the Courage to Refuse movement, was for him an act in the service of Zionism. However, the much more difficult phase for him came later, when he realized he was no longer a full member of the Zionist camp. Voting for the Hadash party marked the point of no return, moving from a Zionist to a non-Zionist identity and it took him a while, he says, to admit publically and perhaps, also accept it within himself. John (lines 252-253) also remembers that the first time he decided to vote for the Hadash party was quite dramatic for him. However, he did not stop there and in his search for a consistent and uncompromising application of human rights and equality values, he found his place as a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)<sup>35</sup> movement activist, which, in his perception, most effectively conducts the anti-Colonialist, anti-Apartheid, and anti-Zionist struggle, which he highly values.

Socialist motivations are ones that several participants mention as their reasons for objecting to Zionism. Ricardo (lines 279-282), who grew up as a non-Zionist socialist, feels

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<sup>35</sup> The BDS movement is an international coalition of organizations and activists working towards ending Israeli occupation of the OPT through employment of economic and political pressure on Israel by the international community. (See: BDS Movement, n.d.).

he never had to transform his identity or shape it. Signing the objectors' letter, however, made him feel that his actions were finally consistent with his identity and his values. Similarly, Carlos (lines 333-343), a predominant anti-Zionist activist himself, bases his political views on his socialist identity.

Similarly, but not identically, Uri is driven by an anti-establishment motivation in forming his non-Zionist identity:

*I didn't feel I fit into my school, the establishment. I [always] had some kind of tendency to rebel against or not accept authority and the rule of the status quo ... As I see it, it's not that there are things that need fixing, but rather, it needs to be very fundamentally cancelled, replaced, demolished – call it any way you want ... I moved from feeling a part of the social order to feeling opposed to it, and this is perhaps the most important thing. And the national question – I came to think about it seriously for the first time as a human being who was suppressed by an awful system, which turns people into obedient zombies and which sells weapons and security services to all kinds of buyers. So, when this is what the 'good guys' are doing, the road to alienation from how this establishment operates to others is very short (Uri, lines 510-520).*

Unlike them, Tomer (lines 459-487), a predominant Mizrachi<sup>36</sup> activist, is driven by post-colonial critical thinking, perceiving Zionism as a European project, which, like any other European colonial movement, aimed primarily to dispossess the native people from their land and simultaneously subordinate the Mizrachi Jews to the hegemonic Ashkenazi ones. Being a Mizrachi Jew, Tomer can identify with the Palestinians both culturally but

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<sup>36</sup> Jews originating in Muslim countries (Mizrach is translated as east). During the early years of the state of Israel, Mizrachi Jews were excluded from key positions and subordinated by the hegemonic, Ashkenazi group (See: Kimmerling, 2001; Shafir & Peled, 2002).

also structurally, as he perceives both groups being deprived of their rights by the Ashkenazi-in-essence Zionism. In his vision, the Jews and the Palestinians are living side by side, without segregation, in mutual acceptance and civic equality.

With similarly conclusions to Tomer's, but with a different rationale, Itamar (lines 562-571; 632-649), who is an enthusiastic supporter of the Canaanism movement<sup>37</sup>, feels that the differentiation between Jews and Arabs who live in Israel/Palestine is artificial and harmful. In his vision, all people of the land should live on equal terms with an identity which is determined by the geographic area of historical Canaan rather than by modern national artificial definitions of Jewish and Palestinian nations.

**Militarism and pacifism.** One of the most worrying superstructures in Israel, says Isaac (353-362) is that its ideology is structured for one, and only one, purpose: maintaining Jews as the dominant social group in Israel and the IDF is one of the main means of executing this agenda. Aaron (lines 654-662) also feels concerned with the IDF's dominance in Israeli civilian life and its influence over the Israeli political system as well as people's openness and critical thinking.

However, despite the comprehensive criticism many of the participants have of Israeli social and political systems, as selective conscientious objectors (SCOs), very few of them hold absolute pacifist views. John (lines 349-360) recalls how, even as an enthusiastic supporter of COs, he found it hard to identify with the NGO New Profile, because of its pacifist ideology. Today, however, he finds pacifism much more consistent with his own universal world view. James, who is the only participant objecting for pacifist reasons, explains how sees his objection:

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<sup>37</sup> A cultural and ideological movement, which was founded by Jews in Mandatory Palestine in the 1930's. It promoted the idea that all the peoples which historically inhabited the middle-East belong to a Hebrew nation, regardless of their religion and ethnicity and that this nation should live together in a single state (Hofmann, 2011).



*I don't know if my objection was political but I do know it was completely pacifist. I didn't want to hold weapons in any way or form. I felt it is very violent, wrong and unfair toward other people that I should have such power in my hands. I wanted no part in it ... My perspective wasn't about the conflict with the Palestinians or the situation of this state. It was simply about me not understanding why I have this power. I don't think I deserve it – I don't think anyone does ... this idea of solving problems by force – force only leads to more force (James, lines 469-478).*

However, the clear majority of participants do not hold pacifist views and they do not oppose military service in principle but only in the specific political context of the occupation (Carlos, lines 262-267; 202-203; Itamar, lines 535-544; 601-607; Yaron, lines 542-550; Itai, lines 216-217; 243-249; Gal, lines 352-360; Omer, lines 265-290). Ricardo explains why he does not consider himself a pacifist:

*For me pacifism feels too religious, like veganism - something I find hard to relate to. I think violence is part of human nature – not one of the good parts of it but a part of it nonetheless. People are violent and we often address conflicts and other situations with violent means. In certain situations, we must use violence. Preventing crimes with violent means seems justifiable to me. I mean, if someone next to me is in danger and by using weapons I can stop or prevent them from being hurt, I would do it without hesitation (Ricardo, lines 92-99).*

This non-pacifist notion, which may seem counter-intuitive supports Dustin Howes' argument that nonviolence is more appealing and holds better potential for social change than straight-forward pacifist outlook (Howes, 2013). What, then, are the guidelines and the boundaries of the participants' political action?

**Just cause and red lines for civil disobedience.** If the COs are not pacifist, as a group, where do they draw the line between obeying the law and civil disobedience? For the

majority, even some of those who do not see themselves as Zionists anymore, the Green Line is their red line. Until the present day, many of them still serve in reserve duty service when it does not involve contact with the civilian population in the OPT (Itamar, lines 535-544; Yaron, lines 542-550; Carlos, lines 202-203; Itai, lines 216-217, 243-249; Gal, lines 352-360; Omer, lines 265-290).

Tomer (line 543) was the only participant who explicitly expressed his motivation as solidarity with the Palestinian people. Almost all other participants focused on the level of individuals' human rights as the trigger to their objection. To explain this, some of them use the concept of Just Cause. For example, Itamar (lines 535-536) defines the problem as military rule over the civilian population, rather than sympathy with the Palestinian national movement. And he continues:

*I told my superior commander, that if tomorrow morning Judea, Samaria and Gaza were annexed [to Israel] and the people there would receive the same rights I have, as an Israeli citizen, I would have been willing to serve in Ramallah or in Khan-Yunis. However, if tomorrow morning a military rule were applied to Netanya – I wouldn't have served in Netanya ... it's a matter of principle – I do not suppress the civilian population (Itamar, lines 536-542).*

Similarly, Gal (lines 352-360), who was assigned to a unit which did not serve in the OPT, feels it fitted him well, as he still feels committed to the military in any action which is aimed at actually protecting Israel. Yaron (lines 542-550) even feels somewhat sorry that he was expelled from his reserve unit following his objection, as this had prevented him later from participating in the second Lebanon war, which despite being a bad idea, he says, did not qualify as an unjust war, in his opinion.

However, unlike the other participants, who draw the line of disobedience at serving in the OPT, Tomer (lines 355-368), Isaac (lines 360-362), and Lior (lines 304-308) express

such a deep mistrust of the IDF that although they do not consider themselves pacifists, they do not feel they can take part in any form of involvement in the military, even a non-combatant one. Even Lior (line 308), who as a musician was offered the opportunity of performing for soldiers as his reserve duty, felt that by doing so he would be supporting the IDF actions and operation and so he preferred to be exempt altogether.

In sum, it is not easy to find a common thread of values or political perception that all participants can agree upon. Some identify as Zionist while others don't, some see Israeli occupation as a particular failure while others have very fundamental criticisms of the basic assumptions on which Zionism was established. Few identify as pacifists while the majority do not. The one set of values which all the participants can relate to is individual human rights – the right of every person to live in a safe, equal, honourable and just environment and conditions. This point relates to *just war theory* (Elshtain, 1992; Evans, 2005; Moseley, 2004) in that avoiding unnecessary harm to the civilian population is a consensual principle in *this theory*. Additionally, *just war theory* provides, in this case, a better ethical framework than the pacifist one. Specifically, *just war theory* is concerned with two main questions: when is fighting justified, and what makes an action in war just. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, it seems that until the decision to object is made, participants were more concerned with the second question of what makes an action in war just. but it became irrelevant, however, as soon as the answer to the first question of when fighting is justified became: when it does not take place in the OPT.

**Alternative masculinity.** As mentioned above, all the participants, while acknowledging the macho-like nature of Israeli militarized masculinity and while even embracing some of its traits in their act of objection, perceive it in a very critical manner. What alternative, then, do they present for this common masculinity?

**Self-awareness.** One of the pathetic traits in militarized masculinity is men's lack of self-awareness of their actual weaknesses and insecurity, which makes them rely on their weapons and violence to prove their manliness, says Carlos (lines 318-324). Yaron explains what he found to be an alternative:

*[The COs I met] have followed the same path as everyone else but they did have this critical sense and this is just a different masculinity ... It is built around self-awareness. That's one thing. And also around dignity. Both self-awareness and acknowledging your fellow person as a human being (Yaron, lines 512-518).*

Some of this self-awareness comes in the form of self-reflection. Jonny, for example, understands today his aggression as a child towards girls, because of his envy of the compassionate way girls were treated, while as a boy he was constantly challenged to behave like a man (715-738).

**Restraint.** A second trait of alternative masculinity is restraint, namely recognition of the power you hold and choosing not to use it. This quality perhaps relates to being in control, which was described as a militarized masculinity trait, but here the meaning is to avoid any expression of aggression. Barney explains:

*[Regarding traits of a different masculinity] I think more of restraint, of accommodation ... Overcoming the component of physical power. At the age of 31, I started to learn Karate as a clear statement that I keep speaking on nonviolence while I don't really know what violence is ... Karate gives me the ability to be present and not to attack. And since I am present, I and those around me are not being attacked ... This expands and accommodates the situation (Barney, lines 10-19).*

**Acknowledging and expressing the feminine side.** Quite a few of the participants have chosen occupations which are considered to be feminine in Israeli society, such as education, or social work. Itai, a social worker, says:

*I chose a very feminine profession. Almost all my colleagues are women and I am used to being the only man in most of the forums I take part in ... I think it was always important to me not to be like everyone else. So are my choices – I enjoy saying I'm a social worker, even though it is not a manly profession (Itai, lines 332-337).*

But also beyond the occupational sphere, expressing feminine aspects has a value. Jonny describes a moment of personal revelation when he found out that a male colleague, who makes feminine gestures, which he thought were unconscious, is not only aware of them but also enjoys being considered feminine:

*This power – so much power. I mean, for me it used to be shameful. Where I come from you always needed to prove that you are a man's man and this moment, when I meet someone who just doesn't care – It revealed something to me and I said hold on, you can just accept this part in you and be proud of it ... This was such a significant revelation for me because I felt that I have this quality, which I always made an effort to protect and conceal, for this fear that I would be seen as feminine. Saying about myself that there is something feminine in me is a milestone – that I can even say it out loud, because it's shameful (Jonny, lines 784-841).*

**Adopting feminist views.** Going against one's own social conventions and challenging political structures involves understanding that oppression of one social group (that is, Palestinians) is connected to oppression of other groups as well, and thus requires exploring the power relations between men and women in society (Sergey, lines 425-427),

or more specifically, what Male Privilege really means (Tomer, lines 625-633). Nir elaborates on this:

*I try to be self-reflective so I try to avoid mansplaining – the phenomenon when a man explains to a woman things she knows better than him. Or, say, treating a woman as someone who can't change a tire in her car. I try very hard not to be like that but I know that sometimes it happens to me because, you know, being determines consciousness, and I live in the society in which I live. But my wife earns more than I do, which means she also works longer hours and I spend more time with our daughter and I don't have a problem with this* (Nir, lines 631-636).

Although it might be considered desirable, different scholars (most of whom are female) doubt if men can actually change their views on social roles and adopt essential feminist attitudes (Gough, 1998; Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998; Segal, 1993). Naturally, self-reports of men regarding their own alternative masculinity are not sufficient to argue that they have actually transformed their masculine self-perception. However, another body of writing on masculinity (Ashe, 2004; R. W. Connell, 1996; Gough, 1998; Pease, 2000), introduces more cautious and reflective notions of transformation, which on the one hand does not pretend to have already successfully completed such a transformation of masculinity but on the other hand, has not given up on this notion either.

### **Political and Social Activism**

Only few of the participants above the age of twenty-five still participate in political activities (Itamar, lines 553-557; Tomer, lines 543-552), unlike the younger ones, who are still very much active in different capacities in social and political movements. However, unlike their days as predominant political activists, most of the participants withdrew with time from political action. Ricardo (lines 165-170) explains this by his disappointment with

the Hadash party's inability to influence Israeli society and public opinion, being a non-Zionist party. Itai (lines 298-317), on the other hand, feels that the movement of objectors simply ran out of energy and that there were no new people to take the lead. Shmulik (lines 414-421) had experienced much violence, both within himself and directed toward him, in a way that made him take one step back from continuous political action except when he feels he is needed. And yet, no one has lost his interest or concerns about Israeli political reality. Some of the participants found other ways to contribute. For instance, Itai (lines 298-317) feels he can contribute to society and to the promotion of his values in his profession as a social worker more than as a political activist. Tomer (lines 543-552) feels that in his work with human rights NGO's he makes a significant contribution, and Shmulik (lines 479-487), both in his academic work and in his social circles feels he raises awareness of the situation, but at the same time expresses disillusionment with the notion that through his actions he can change the world.

### **Concerns for the Future**

While Yaron (lines 352-364) remembers the days when he was among the founders of Courage to Refuse, as being very optimistic regarding the political change they can bring about, participants today express more pessimistic expectations regarding the future, especially when they think about their children and the kind of state they will inherit from their parents (Ricardo, lines 172-180; Isaac, lines 453-461; James, lines 500-503). But with all the uncertainty and pessimism, Lior expresses his motto, which all COs can probably relate to:

*I still strongly believe – and in this sense, I am motivated by this historical perspective – that a day will come, in my lifetime or afterwards, and everything will look different from the way it is today; that I am not extreme at all in my views; that from a historical perspective this madness will be viewed as a very dark period in*

*history and each one will be judged by what he did during this time* (Lior, lines 428-433).

### **Summary**

Most of the participants were not aware of the concept of CO in their pre-military phase: they were only introduced to it during their military service or even afterwards. As they decided to refuse to serve in the OPT, one of two alternative paths were chosen. The majority chose to confront the system, declare their ideological stance and pay the price for it in the form of imprisonment. A minority chose grey objection, that is, they used other excuses to gain exemption from service in the OPT. Accordingly, most participants see their objection as a political act aimed at influencing other people rather than as a personal choice of simply avoiding service in the OPT.

One of the personal traits which may be considered masculine is a rebellious nature, which quite a few participants describe as one that enabled or triggered the act of objection. Additionally, many participants do value their willingness to confront the system as a masculine trait. For a few, whose social circles support CO, their act raised their social status and strengthened their self-perception. Thus, relying on typical masculine traits for the purpose of objection served the participants very well, however critical they were regarding typical masculinity in Israel.

Prison provided very different experiences for reserve duty soldiers and for compulsory duty ones. While the former group remembers it as an unpleasant but bearable experience, for the latter group it was arduous and traumatizing. Later consequences, in the form of formal or informal sanctions were quite minor for participants, if any.

Growing up in Israel, the common masculine traits, in the eyes of the participants, are related to the characteristics of militarized masculinity - aggression, control and assertiveness, machismo and endurance. This type of masculinity is tempting for young



Israeli men and entails some benefits for them, in the form of high self-perception and social support systems. However, from their perspective today, the participants view it very critically. As the objection involves partially turning away from social and cultural conventions, the participants specify alternative masculine traits, which they had or wanted to develop. Among these traits are self-awareness, restraint, acknowledging feminine personality traits and adoption of feminist views.

Presently, the participants make up a very diverse group of people regarding their views on Zionism, militarism in Israel and civil disobedience. While several participants do consider themselves Zionists, others feel they have crossed the fence to the non-Zionist side. However, most of the participants do not hold pacifist views, nor do they object to military service in principle – just to service in the OPT, which involves contact with the civilian population. There are very few principles which all COs may agree on, the most important one being individual human rights: the right of every person to live in a safe, equal, honourable and just environment and conditions. However, while all of them are still very interested in politics, in comparison to their past as committed political activists, currently most participants withdrew from political life for various reasons, including tiredness, disillusionment, and an avoidance of violence. However, they do not have regrets over their decision to object and proudly stand by it.

The next two chapters will closely examine the process of transformation leading the participants to the decision and act of conscientious objection.

## Chapter 8: Findings - Three Modes of Transformation

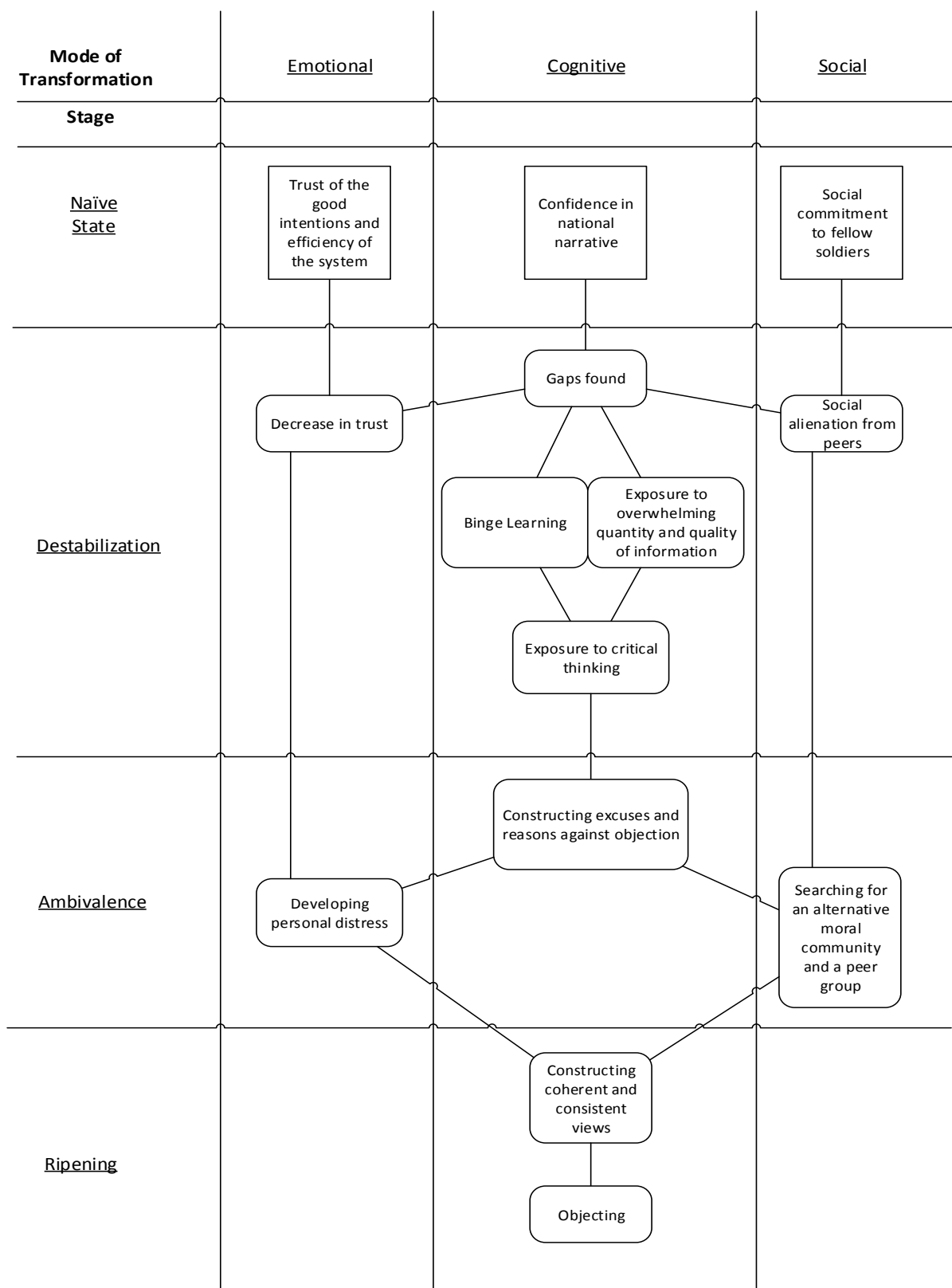
In the previous three chapters, the analysis of the participants' stories described the main stages they went through during their lives, and showed how their life stories have been affected by the transformations they experienced in their political world view.

Either by going through a gradual process or experiencing a few major life-changing events, the participants could identify turning points which served as catalysts in the transformative processes they were undergoing. This chapter reviews the main events and processes which eventually led to their decision to object, and the ways in which they understood this process. Following this, a macro-level view of the entire process of transformation is presented, in accordance with the participants' own introspection.

Specifically, this chapter presents three modes of transformation which can be derived from the participants' narratives. These are the emotional, cognitive and social modes. Although presented separately, none of the three modes takes place independently. Figure 3 presents an integrative model of transformation which summarizes the chapter's findings, emphasizing how these three modes are interdependent. In the summary of this chapter, a detailed description and explanation of the model is presented.

It is important to note that these stages are based on the overall analysis of the interviews and do not necessarily imply a linear process or an obligatory sequence of stages, which each participant passed through. However, these models provide an analytical framework which can be used to understand the different dimensions of the transformation process and their interactions.

Figure 3. An Integrative Model of Transformation.



## **The Emotional Mode of Transformation**

### **Loss of Trust in the System**

One important convention many of the participants were brought up believing in is the integrity, good faith and efficiency of the state of Israel and particularly the IDF, which is consistently rated as the most trustworthy state institution in Israel (Hermann, Heller, Cohen, Be'ery, & Lebel, 2014).

**Innocent mistakes.** The least bad case is described by Jonny (lines 284-349; 689-695), who, in his position as an elite unit officer, came to realize that the IDF, like any other organization, suffers from inefficiency and internal intrigues and is generally imperfect. While still believing that the superior commandment's intentions are professional and noble, Jonny found that daily practice was occasionally biased, harmful and driven by petty struggles for prestige and *old boys' club* mentality. Uri (lines 455-471) also felt that elitist notions were common in his unit. This also correlated with ethnic and socio-economic background, as all commanding officers were of Ashkenazi descent, many with an "*Aryan appearance*", in his words, which struck him as a consistent policy of his unit.

**Negligence.** The second level of the system being imperfect is negligence. In Itamar's unit, the company commander was not following safety rules when he overlooked maintenance of some of the armed vehicles of the company. As a result of this behaviour, a soldier was killed in an accident. Itamar remembers this event as a major crisis for many of the company's soldiers, because they realized that their superior officer, who was supposed to be their role model, was directly responsible for the death of their fellow soldier (Itamar, lines 176-187). Similarly, when he was only fifteen years old, Omer lost his foster father in a weapons operations accident (Omer, lines 22-27).

**Cover-up.** A third level of loss of trust in the system involved realizing that not only does it fail from time to time, but that it also goes to great lengths to cover up its failures and

unethical actions. Lior (lines 15-24) remembers his mother spending many year in courts in an attempt to determine the circumstances of her brother's death from friendly fire in action. She found out that, in order to cover up this incident, the bodies of some forty soldiers who were killed that night were sent to different hospitals, while the battalion commander was on vacation and out of reach. There is a somewhat ironic side to the military's refusal to pay the price for its wrongdoing, as the conscientious objectors consistently expressed their willingness to pay the price for their objection (Carlos, lines 246-260).

**Malpractice and bad intentions.** However uncomfortable the realizations of the previous three levels of losing trust in the system were, the most devastating ones were those involved in realizing that not only was there misconduct in the IDF, but that there were bad intentions there as well. Yaron (lines 62-77) and Carlos (lines 171-179) describe how they learned about brutal violence that IDF soldiers employed during the first Intifada and how shocked they were to find out about it. Carlos describes this conduct as cynical when, for instance, he tells a story he heard about soldiers detaining twelve Palestinians and breaking their arms and legs with clubs, following the directions given by Yitzhak Rabin, who was minister of defence at the time, but breaking only the arms of one of the Palestinians so that he could go back to his village and call for help. For Carlos, this was the deal breaker in terms of his adherence to the IDF and Israeli policies.

Niv, who spent much time and energy learning Arabic towards his prospective military position in an intelligence unit, and was very passionate about the language, was devastated to find out how the military views Arabs and Palestinians in his introductory day at his unit:

*In our naiveté, the day of our introductory class has arrived. We went upstairs to the class, in which we were going to spend our training period. We walked into the classroom, which had been decorated by our instructors. On the walls, there was a*

*really large Palestinian flag, as well as Hamas and ISIS flags; lots of pictures of people with an Arab appearance – terrorists and various articles from newspapers on counter-terrorism; Orange ID cards were hanging on the walls – ID cards issued by the Palestinian authority, of just ordinary people. And there were folders – each class member received a folder prepared by his commander ... On my folder, there was a picture of three Palestinian kids holding stones around the Temple Mount. Their goal was to motivate us ... [but] for me it had the opposite effect – I was shocked. Seeing three kids my little brother's age with their names under their picture. I decided I did not want to take part in what was happening there ... I'm telling this because it was typical of the general atmosphere and of how they viewed Arabic culture (Niv, lines 393-412).*

***Experiencing the treatment of IDF soldiers from the other side.*** In addition to their experiences as soldiers, Gal remembers an interesting event when he participated in a non-violent demonstration against the separation wall:

*I remember going to a very aggressive demonstration, in terms of the violence employed by the military ... You stand in this mostly Palestinian demonstration – there were also Israelis but it was Palestinian in its inclination. It was planned as a non-violent demonstration, led by the Scouts marching band. And suddenly, there was a major charge – so much violence was employed by the military and Magav – we were shot at, hit, tear gassed and so on ... I remember standing there with a friend who was an officer on reserve duty and we were being shot at ... and thinking to myself, if they really expected me to wear this uniform the week after? They are shooting at me now - what are they thinking? ... It illustrated for me the absurdity of this option altogether (Gal, lines 694-707).*

Thus, the change of roles, also noted by both Gal and Sergey, demonstrated to him how impossible it would be for him to adopt the role of a soldier from that point on.

Similarly, Sergey (lines 457-467) participated in a rally aimed at delivering humanitarian aid to the West Bank and protesting against the Israeli Occupation, during his mandatory service. At that rally, he witnessed and experienced first-hand military and police brutal reactions in their firing tear gas and rubber bullets at the demonstrators. For him, that was the last straw, after which he realized he could no longer take part in an organization which acted this way, affecting not only him personally, but also everything he stood for.

For Tomer, the ultimate realization of Israel's immoral conduct came during operation Cast Lead in December 2008, when he was working in a human rights NGO, following closely the events in the Gaza strip:

*I remember that after this operation I told myself: "enough, this is a cause for divorce between me and the state". I remember this period as horrible. At that time, I was studying political science and read a lot on the South African Apartheid regime and I got this deep understanding that in South Africa there were white regions where everything was more-or-less normal, but outside them horrible actions took place in the Bantustans. And I remember coming to visit my parents after constantly hearing about what was going on in Gaza – it was winter and it was cold – and I'm coming to their well-heated home and I'm thinking to myself, what an enormous gap between this and the reality I follow daily. For instance, I got this phone call from a [Palestinian] dad, who is in tears and in the background, I hear shooting and he asks me where he should hide... Or another time when I answered a phone call from a hospital under attack and we had to explain to the doctor what was going on and what to do. We are trying to call the military and ask them to hold their fire at the hospital. And, you know, I come to my parents' home and everything*

*is so white and tidy, donuts for Hanukah and so on ... And I remember my dad asking me how am I, after a day at work and me saying: "What do you mean how am I? I'm witnessing a massacre!" and then he says: "Okay, but how are **you**?" He cannot understand that I am what I hear from Gaza and that there is no other me. I remember crying in the mornings when I come to work - really crying (Tomer, lines 410-429).*

The reasons for loss of trust which the participants mention closely correlate with Barber's terminology (Barber, 1983), according to which three main factors may cause loss of trust: a disturbance of natural and moral order, the incompetence of key actors and realizing that the leaders' motivations are driven by their self-interest rather than by their constituencies' good.

A follow-up distinction between trust and confidence is proposed by Luhmann (2000). Trust resembles risk-taking, in which a given action is compared to its alternatives in their expected outcomes. The better the assessment of a certain choice's outcomes in comparison to its alternatives, the stronger is one's trust in its agents (for example, assessing the sincerity of a certain car dealership over others). Confidence, on the other hand, is strongly associated with expectations. That is, the higher the expectations from a leader to act morally, the stronger is the effect on confidence. Confidence does not consider alternatives and so one's choice involves placing her or his confidence in someone or "to live in a state of permanent uncertainty and to withdraw expectations without having anything with which to replace them" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 96). A very important implication of Lumann's distinction between trust and confidence is in their attributions:

The distinction between confidence and trust depends on perception and attribution ... In the case of confidence, you will react to disappointment by external attribution.



In the case of trust, you will have to consider an internal attribution and eventually regret your trusting choice (Luhmann, 2000, p. 96).

The two elements differentiating trust from confidence are the presence of alternatives and the conclusions drawn by the loss of either one. It seems that initially the participants were confident. They could not imagine an alternative to military service and any disappointment in the system resulted in external attribution, namely explaining the cause of their disappointment in the system by external and circumstantial reasons, such as the political climate or Palestinian aggression. However, something caused a shift from loss of confidence to loss of trust. That is, alternatives started to emerge, in the form of the option to object and attribution became internal, that is, reasons for disappointment were steadily shifting to the state and military systems rather than the political environments in which they are situated.

### **Personal Distress**

As mentioned above, in the section describing participants' experiences during their basic training, many of them experienced personal distress. As their military service continued, most of them managed to overcome this distress, or at least reduce it to a degree they could cope with and function on a reasonable level. However, a few of the participants could not overcome this distress (Sil'i, 2002). Gal describes his breakdown during his basic training and the ambivalence accompanying it:

*I don't know whether to describe it as an inner conflict or as different parts of your soul coming together. On the one hand, socially speaking it was really great. I was with good people and I felt very well in that sense. On the other hand, there was this very intense feeling of distress of "I don't want to be here, I shouldn't be here, and it's not right for me to be here". But then also a great difficulty with me feeling this way – a strong sense of shame ... Eventually I was transferred from this unit as a result*

*of a psychological evaluation by a mental health officer. I think I couldn't really understand what I was going through at the time. I mean, deep inside things were difficult and mixed up because as much as I was distressed, I was feeling guilty for being distressed* (Gal, lines 188-201).

Some other participants experienced this deep kind of distress later in their mandatory service or during their reserve duty service, in a manner and to a degree they had not experienced before. James (lines 164-171) thinks that during much of his service he could have been diagnosed with clinical depression, just counting the days until the term of his service would finally be over. However, his real mental breakdown came only later, when the second Intifada started. He describes his feeling at the time: *"I just didn't want to be there ... tied up, feeling like I was imprisoned"* (James, lines 294-313).

Gil had his first experience as a temporary checkpoint commander on reserve duty service. He describes the stress he experienced there:

*I remember that at some point I was nominated as a patrol commander and we were ordered – one of these stupid orders - to erect an unexpected checkpoint at a certain location. I remember being insanely distressed, especially one event in which a settler didn't stop at the checkpoint and I pointed my weapon at him – a really shitty situation. I remember being extremely stressed out. And again, this was very new to me because I have never been either in the territories or in Lebanon. Actually, I had a deluxe mandatory service and suddenly I actually needed to face stressful situations, which I had never had to face before – situations of uncertainty and danger* (Gil, lines 245-250).

Gal (lines 310-340) spent one reserve duty service as a guard of Palestinian prisoners in a military prison. He remembers feeling like a *"watch dog who was instructed to be blood thirsty"* and that he experienced the soldiers of the jail's special intervention unit as

aggressive and disgusting. He completed that term of reserve duty service with the decision never to return there. Similarly to Gal, Isaac (lines 240-248) also remembers one exceptionally traumatic reserve duty service, after which he decided he was not going to do it anymore. However, it took several more years until he followed up on that decision with an act of objection.

Reports of soldiers' personal stress is most common in the context of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (see, for example: Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Rose, Bisson, Churchill, & Wessely, 2002; Smith et al., 2008). However, some research focusing on the relations between military service, especially during basic training), and development of personal stress offers explanations other than suffering trauma in combat, as to why some soldiers experience stronger personal stress than others. The first explanation relates to Bowlby's *attachment theory* (Bowlby, 1958, 1980). In their research on 92 Israeli recruits, Mikulincer and Orbach (1995) found that individual differences in attachment style influence individuals' reactions to stressful experiences and their coping strategies. Specifically, they found that ambivalent individuals tended to use emotion-focused strategies, while avoidant ones used more distance coping mechanisms. In contrast to both of these, secure individuals were more open to seeking support in coping with stressful experiences. Thus, insecure attachment styles (that is, ambivalent and avoidant) predict loneliness and social isolation in times of stressful events and experiences, thus increasing the sensations of personal distress. Combining this finding with the one proposing that a secure attachment style promotes feelings of compassion for others (see chapter three on the emotional transformation mode), it seems that an insecure attachment style diverts the emotional focus inwards rather than towards others.

A different explanation is offered by Florian, Mikulincer, and Taubman (1995), following their research on 276 Israeli recruits. Their findings suggest that commitment and

control are positively correlated with the successful management of stressful situations:

“Whereas commitment allows people to remain involved in the situation, control leads them to deploy active efforts to find proper solutions to the problematic situation” (Florian et al., 1995, pp. 692-693). The implication of these findings for development of personal stress is therefore that lack of commitment or lack of effort to find solutions to hard situations, or both may explain the development of personal stress, similarly to the way participants describe their own stress. Such lack of commitment and control may be interpreted in the context of the participants’ narratives as a lack of motivation to endure hardship within a system they lost trust in, thus resulting in high levels of distress.

Finally, Kimhi and Sagy (2008) examined the relation between moral justification and levels of stress among Israeli soldiers serving at roadblocks in the OPT. Their findings suggest that moral justification significantly relates to feelings of adjustment. Thus, acute personal stress among soldiers serving in the OPT may indicate that their moral justification abilities become impaired in the presence of emerging doubts as to the ethical value of military conduct in the OPT in general and their participation in it in particular.

### **The Social Context of the Transformative Process**

As noted in the previous chapter, the social context and the peer group play a very important role in socialization processes, in stopping ingroup members from withdrawing from the group and turning against it. In this section, the stories of the participants also demonstrate how the social context can be not only an inhibiting factor for the tendency to turn away from the ingroup’s narrative and conduct, but also how an alternative social context can facilitate and offer support for such a transition.

In the social context, the process of transformation, as described by the participants, also consists of several stages. First, there is the strong bond with the peer group; then, as one starts to have doubts which the peer group does not share, he finds himself gradually

drifting apart from them; later, at some point, the future CO starts looking for an alternative moral community, that is, a social group which would approve of his ideological stance and the action of objection. Finally, as the CO is ready to object, he would often do so together with others or, at least, knowing that there are others like him - that he has a potential support group, in case he needs one.

### **Importance of the Peer Group**

The immediate social group surrounding a soldier very quickly becomes not only the group of his best friends, but also those to whom he is committed the most in his military duty. In fact, while participants managed to overcome the feeling they were betraying the state in their objection, some of them could never fully overcome a sense of guilt that they were abandoning their friends in their unit. Gil (lines 456-460) says that even in the days of operation Cast Lead, when he had already determined that he wanted out, feeling no remorse for the values he was brought up with, he still found it very hard to let his comrades take great risks while he did not. For Nir (lines 675-688), an officer, it was even harder since he felt that it was not only friends he left behind to undertake the military duties he refused, but that they were his subordinates whose wellbeing and safety it was his duty to protect, and although it did not prevent him from refusing, it did haunt him for a long while.

These descriptions of the peer groups further demonstrate the importance of group belonging to self-perception and affirmation in general and in the military unit specifically (Ahronson & Cameron, 2007; Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011; Eagly, Baron, & Hamilton, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004), as apparently group membership has a stronger influence on conformity than other factors such as *obedience to authority* (Milgram & Van den Haag, 1978; Packer, 2012; Zimbardo, 1974).

### **Drifting Apart from the Peer Group and from Former Friends**

As a soldier enters the cognitive stage of destabilization and begins to doubt the automatic justifications given by his peer group to the actions he feels uncomfortable with, he begins to feel different from his friends. Alternatively, some participants simply felt they drifted apart or endorsed more humanistic views, which their peers did not share (Jonny, lines 382-390; Niv, lines 331-342).

Isaac (lines 231-239), for instance, was astonished by what he calls “*other soldiers’ blindness to and even approval of unjust conduct*”. This took the form of both aggressive behaviours and acceptance of violent and racist utterances by extreme right-wing soldiers. He discovered that even soldiers he considered relatively liberal regress to complete acceptance and approval of the militant and violent discourse (Isaac, lines 385-392). That is, that the social context of the combat unit makes even liberally minded soldiers succumb to reactionary positions.

The last part of Isaac’s words, namely the feeling that all his fellow soldiers accepted this conduct and regarded it as a normal state of affairs, is a feeling shared by many participants, and which strongly contributed to many of them feeling socially alienated from their units. Yaron (lines 193-214) was labelled as a leftist in his company because he reported a petty officer he saw smashing Palestinian cars’ headlights. This, in addition to his feeling that he could not really share his doubts and difficulties on his missions with the friends in his unit made him feel isolated and socially excluded at times. In Ricardo’s case (lines 200-211), being labelled as a leftist even put him in physical danger from the soldiers he was training.

Jonny (lines 376-390; 716-720) also felt how friends from his unit could not accommodate the doubts he was developing and the political transition he was going through to the point that they both gave up on each other. Aaron (lines 632-644), on the

other hand, realized that his friends from the military academy were aware of his political transition and he started getting some very angry messages from them. He then decided to openly explain himself to them and was positively surprised by the accepting responses of some, although not all, of his friends' responses.

Apart from the military peer group, the process of transition gradually led to several participants drifting apart from their childhood friends as well. Knowing his childhood friends, Dan (290-300), who had not confronted the system so far, was quite sure that they would not accept his decision, once he had made it.

Other participants say that they were the ones who distanced themselves from former friends (Tomer, lines 437-440). Niv (lines 348-357) felt that as all his friends were already active soldiers, while he was still on a pre-military Arabic course, he gradually found himself left out of their conversations, since he was not familiar with their day-to-day military life. Later, when he started dating a girl who was a GCO (General Conscientious Objector), he was reluctant to tell them about her, as he knew they would neither understand nor accept that. Therefore, he avoided situations in which they might meet her and, these friendships gradually died out. Similarly, Omer (lines 172-189) also felt that as he was going through the transition, his social environment changed, mostly on his initiative. At the time, he explains, he simply felt that they would not be able to accommodate his new thoughts and position. Interestingly, he adds that his friends tried to hold on to the friendship, but he felt he could not go through with his objection, while still clinging to old friendships.

The process of drifting apart from the peer group described here corresponds with Opatow's concept of *moral exclusion*, which occurs when "individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply" (Opatow, 1990, p. 1). However, Opatow views this phenomenon from the

point of view of the excluding group rather than the excluded individual (or group), thus disregarding the latter's agency and freedom of choice and portraying them merely as objects, on whom exclusion is imposed. The participants' narratives, however, describe a process of self-initiated exclusion. This is undoubtedly a very hard process to undergo, as the individual loses his closest friends and almost remains in a social vacuum. Thus, once realizing that the responses from their peers were disappointing, participants immediately started to explore social alternatives.

Packer and Miners (2012) see the difference between non-conformity and disengagement from social groups from the standpoint of the disengaged individual. They define disengagement as "a process in which group members distance themselves from the group" (Packer & Miners, 2012, p. 317), thus making it a purely social process, with the content-related context irrelevant. Nonconformity, on the other hand, while occasionally manifested by disengagement, is acting in a way which is not compatible with group norms but motivated by the wish to improve the group's decision-making and conduct. In other words, nonconformity is a response of an individual to the in-group's norms rather than to its social framework. In their study, Packer and Miners found that thinking about how a group norm may cause individual harm triggers a type of nonconformity that is associated with disengagement from the group, whereas thinking about how a norm may cause collective harm triggers a type of nonconformity that is not associated with disengagement. Applying their findings to the present study, it seems that since social disengagement was reported by most of the participants, their main concern was of the harm that their conduct as soldiers causes to individuals – both themselves and their fellow soldiers but more importantly, their violation of Palestinians' human rights. This is also consistent with what participants describe as their main concern, namely individual human rights, as described in chapter seven.



### Searching for a New Moral Community

It seems that a social vacuum cannot remain unpopulated for very long. Once a person unties old bonds, new ones are soon created. New moral communities come in different forms. For Niv (lines 441-449), it was the staff of a bi-lingual preschool he volunteered in. After a long time in the military he finally felt that his Arabic could once again be used for good purposes – to communicate with people. Similarly, for Omer (lines 178-184), it was the staff of the NGO he was volunteering in.

For others, political groups provided alternative moral communities. Jonny (lines 455-461) describes how, as he was going through the process leading him to become a CO, he entered the circles of the radical left activists. At first, he says, he did this to dispute with them from a Zionist point of view, but with time, he felt more comfortable with their political views. Uri found his new moral community with members of the Hadash youth movement, which formed an important anchor in his life. He explains why:

*This group was strongly connected to my personal journey, to my criticism of, and my discomfort with the place I was situated personally, socially and politically. It also confirmed for me the process I was going through, even regardless of social affiliation, of my political consolidation ... I felt like I was feeling as home with this group much more than at any other place during my weekdays in the military (Uri, lines 227-240).*

Later, Uri (lines 393-403) continues, during the events of October 2000<sup>38</sup>, in one of the demonstrations against police brutality, Uri was introduced to some people who became his closest friends since then: *“And so, I met people with whom I connected, argued with*

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<sup>38</sup> A series of protests by Palestinian citizens of Israel, which took place during October 2000. In his narrative, Uri refers to the first phase of these events, from 1 to 6 October, was marked by massive demonstrations in Arab localities throughout Israel in sympathy with the second intifada; in the course of these demonstrations, twelve unarmed Arab citizens and one Palestinian from the OPT were shot dead by Israeli security forces, a thousand were wounded, and hundreds were arrested (Bishara, 2001).

*about politics, and made friends. This was my new social environment”* (Uri, lines 402-403).

**Socialization of COs and the roles of peer group and NGO support.** One special kind of alternative moral community is the peer groups of objectors. A few exceptional participants say they simply did not feel the need for peer support. For instance, Lior (lines 416-422), a grey objector, while being familiar with some COs and following their stories, did not feel a special need for peer support. Since he never had to confront the IDF about his choice, this seems quite reasonable. However, Gal (lines 542-558), a confronter, felt that his new moral community, consisting of the staff of the human rights NGO he was working for, was sufficient and provided him with all the support and encouragement he needed in order to object.

However, most of the participants did feel the need for allies beyond their social circles of alternative moral communities. That is, it was not always enough just to have people who approved of CO and could relate to the objectors. Sometimes it was important to have people who knew exactly what it felt like, with all its complexities and challenges. James (lines 362-365), for example, felt ready to object much earlier than he actually did. He says that he postponed his act of objection because among his friends in the unit, he could not find a single one who would do it with him. Had there been anyone, he probably would have objected much earlier, he says.

Peer groups of COs can be accessed in one of two ways. The first is through NGOs, which support COs. One of the older NGOs is Yesh Gvul. The support Carlos (lines 304-307) received from this organization during his imprisonment periods was invaluable, he says. Its members' demonstrations outside his prison were extremely encouraging for him. Similarly, Itamar (lines 551-553) enjoyed the support he received from Yesh Gvul and Sergey (lines 328-330) even received supportive letters from both Israel and international

destinations through this NGO. Nir (lines 425-432) even received advice regarding how to pack his bag for prison and what he could expect there, which helped to lessen some of the concerns he had about objecting. Another NGO whose members' support participants found very helpful was Combatants for Peace, which consists of Israeli and Palestinian ex-combatants who decided to lay down their arms and co-operate towards a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Isaac (lines 423-430) found the experience of this group's members very helpful before his imprisonment and before appearing before the Conscience Committee. Aaron, who joined this group during his compulsory duty service recalls his encounter with this organization:

*While I was still in the military, but in a non-combatant position, I started to be active in Combatants for Peace. They fascinated me. They really did. I watched many films they made and because they emphasized the personal stories of their members, it touched a very emotional spot for me. It touches not so much the mind, but the heart. They hold encounters not through rifle sights and they say that almost the only place Israelis and Palestinians meet is in the [Israelis'] military service, which is an extremely violent and hard encounter that leaves very bad memories because it is accompanied by so much violence and stress. They appeared to me to be so important and courageous that I very much wanted to join them. To see what they do. To know Palestinians myself. But the military did not allow me ... but I joined their activities nonetheless (Aaron, lines 402-409).*

Another way to connect with a peer group is to establish one, and many of the participants took part in COs grassroots organizations or COs' letters, which were open public letters written by current or prospective soldiers declaring their intention to object. The most significant and large scale of those was called The Combatants' Letter (2003),

which later became known as the Courage to Refuse organization<sup>39</sup>. This was an initiative of a few, which very rapidly gained momentum and reached over 600 combatant' signatures, who identified themselves by name, rank and ID numbers. Itai (lines 190-201) found objecting from within this group much easier and Yaron explains what was so appealing for him in this organization:

*... And then on a left-wing website I found this ad about soldiers who were organizing to object from serving in the territories. They scheduled a meeting to discuss this ... so I came to the meeting and decided to join on the spot ... I think that what I found attractive in it was that it was all going to be together. Finally, I met people who felt the same as I did, politically speaking. On compulsory, as well as reserve duty, there might have been three or four people like me, but the emotional depth, meaning how concerned they were by the situation – I found it only at that meeting. Each one of the participants felt what I was feeling so there was something very empowering there (Yaron, lines 316-348).*

Jonny, whose objection came much later, was among the initiators of another Objectors' letter. The importance of peer support in Jonny's case was not only to provide encouragement to a decision already made, but to actually build up towards a final decision, as he describes it:

*We met, a few friends from the military, with whom I had no contact and I didn't realize they were going through a similar process to my own. So, we met and discussed it and gradually understood better and consolidated, as a group. It was a process in which the group was shaping its individuals – it was a sort of reciprocal formation – seeing there are other people like us helped us reach the conclusion that*

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<sup>39</sup> Eleven of the participants in this study had signed this letter. Another five signed other similar COs' letters.

*the most important thing we could do to [end] the occupation was to come out with this letter* (Jonny, lines 676-681).

In sum, the social dimension of the process of transformation is integrated into the cognitive dimension. It is triggered by cognitive destabilization but also conditions the continuation of the cognitive process by the need to identify, and be accepted by, an established proper moral community or a group of peers, which will provide the individual with the support he needs to follow through on the process of transformation and to act upon it.

### **Cognitive Transformation Process**

In the process of cognitive transition, three stages emerge from the participants' descriptions. The process starts with destabilization of the certainty of one's own conventions and basic assumptions, continues to ambivalence, in which attempts to balance the arguments that support and oppose the concept of objection emerge, and ends in a stage of ripening, during which coherent and determined realization comes to the fore, and where morally the appropriate action is disobeying orders or discontinuing military service altogether.

#### **Destabilization**

As time passed, for some during their mandatory military service and for others later, the dissonance between their views and values, and their actions as soldiers became increasingly acute. A trigger for destabilization arose from the emotional mode of transformation, in which the participants' trust in the system had become questionable, which created a serious question in their minds, by means of which acquiring both new and contradictory information and critical thinking became more possible.

Niv (lines 412-422) dedicated much time and energy to learning Arabic to a very high level. Although, as mentioned above, he did this as part of his preparations to serve in

the Intelligence Corps, he developed a deep appreciation for the language and wanted it to be used *“to communicate, to get to know people and create comfort”* (Niv, line 419).

Instead, he found himself listening, during the day, to Palestinian communication, phone calls and media, and in the evening, meeting and socially interacting with Palestinians. Itai (lines 184-190) recalls being on reserve duty during the second Intifada with an increasing feeling of dissonance between his values and actions he had to be part of, such as clearing areas on the border with the Gaza strip, which included demolishing houses and uprooting trees in order to create clear lines of sight.

For Itamar, who, as a reserve duty officer, was involved in planning checkpoints and the separation wall in the Jerusalem area, an encounter with a Palestinian fellow student produced a very strong dissonance between his practice in the military and the actual human beings it affected:

*In the third year of my undergraduate studies I took a theatre-in-workshop in Arabic ... We were only five or six people, and one of them was a [Palestinian] girl from Jerusalem but since her father worked in Ramallah, she lived in Ramallah. One day I meet her at the library and she didn't seem well to me. I ask her if she was sick and she said, “No, I'm just tired”. – “why are you tired?” – “I got up at 4 am”. So, I asked her why she got at 4 am?” and she answered, “To get here on time”. Now, I knew she lived in Ramallah. We are in Mount Scopus and I'm trying to think – I've known this area for five years now and I know that even in the worst rush hour, if you leave in the morning and are stuck in traffic, it shouldn't take more than an hour with all the traffic jams. And she said, “It takes me 3.5 or 4 hours to get from Ramallah to Jerusalem - because of the checkpoints” and then it hit me. I mean, if I need to put my finger on a moment when it dawned on me – that would be it. Because for the first time, my actions in uniform related to what I experienced when*

*I wore jeans and a checked shirt at university. Suddenly, the military part of my psyche connected with the civilian part and that was the moment ... I don't think she knew I was doing my reserve duty service in the area. She simply told me she gets up early in the morning to go through all the checkpoints ... As an officer planning the fences it was clear to me that I had to be as friendly as possible to the population, namely I leave them passages, I don't block everywhere ... And then suddenly the connection between the military existence and the civic one became very clear because the generic Palestinian materialized into someone I knew, who sat next to me in class and studied with me – the abstract became very concrete (Itamar, lines 378-405).*

The stage of destabilization typically includes two cognitive components: acquiring new and contradictory information, and exposure to critical thinking.

**Acquiring new and contradictory information.** One of the strongest catalysts of change which the participants mention is exposure to new and contradictory information to what they accepted as fact when they were growing up – information regarding the Israeli narrative of the conflict and violation of human rights by Israel, and the day-to-day reality in the West Bank and Gaza.

In chapter two, when discussing barriers to acquiring this kind of information, the discussion raised the issue of barriers presented by cognitive filters, which make most people avoid or disregard such information. The question arising from that discussion is how can these filters be overcome? In their interviews, participants mention two ways: binge learning and the overwhelming quantity and quality of information.

**Binge learning.** Once their interest and sense of urgency was triggered, several of the participants engaged in binge learning, that is, independently, actively and intensively reading about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and seeking answers to unanswered questions

they had. Interestingly, the participants who described a period of binge learning are those who also objected during their mandatory service, suggesting perhaps that this mode of intense learning allows for faster absorption and processing of new and contradictory information. Additionally, it seems that a sense of urgency is required to engage in binge learning. Uri (lines 268-271) describes it as a phase in which he used to seek online information and then use it for self-reflection and creation of a coherent “*jigsaw puzzle image of the world*”. Similarly, Isaac (lines 198-202) entered a phase of intensive reading of history, triggered by one of his teachers. Niv describes his own experience, as he was going through military training:

*I begin staying up at nights, trying to learn, through my smartphone, in the few minutes off which we had during the day – and we weren’t allowed to do that, you see? But nevertheless trying to learn about the conflict, about politics, to read conscientious objectors’ letters, to understand what withdrawing from the military really means* (Niv, lines 424-428).

Aaron (lines 291-327) was just a high school graduate at the time of the approaching elections, when he would vote for the first time, and he realized that he didn’t know enough to make an informed decision on who to vote for. This understanding triggered a binge learning process for the purpose of better understanding the Israeli political system and context. This was the first time he heard the word ‘occupation’ and he reflected on his future position as a soldier in the IDF. Aaron describes this period as “*opening a window to a new world. I underwent a very rapid transformation*” (Aaron, line 313), which eventually led him to decide that he could not be a combat soldier and later, during his basic training, that he could not be a soldier at all.

***Overwhelming quantity and quality of information.*** Presumably, cognitive filters can make a person disregard only a certain amount of contradictory information. Once a



quantitative threshold has been crossed, it seems that one must consider one's total outlook in the light of the new information. This was one of the things Tomer (lines 327-353) described in his position as a case officer in an NGO, when he was exposed to many cases of human rights violations perpetrated by Israel. This exposure provided him with a complete understanding of how the Israeli occupation's bureaucracy was "suffocating the Palestinian people" (Tomer, line 335). However, it was not only about the quantity of information. In his role, he had the opportunity to hear first-hand testimonies from Palestinians, which allowed him to connect with them on a personal level. Gal explains how this exposure played a role in his identity review:

*At that time, this [working for an NGO] became a dominant component in my life and gradually, with my most fundamental self-identity ... When you examine transformative and radicalizing processes, which I was interested in regarding both myself and other people – what makes one more radical, even from his own surroundings. From my experience, it is exposure, the amount of exposure. The more you are exposed to reality itself, in the field, to what is going on, the more you are becoming increasingly aware of the gap between reality and rhetoric – how reality is described and referred to (Gal, lines 450-455).*

***Intermediaries of exposure to new and contradictory information.*** Unlike the participants who engaged in binge learning, most participants experienced a considerably longer learning process. One of the reasons for this is presumably a lack of both access to information and a sense of urgency to engage in such learning.

These participants required frameworks which would allow them to access such information without resisting it. The participants mention two such frameworks: human rights NGOs, and academic studies.

*Human rights NGOs.* While most mainstream Israeli media is biased in the information it publishes, in that it is consistent with the dominant Israeli narrative, sources of information which do not abide by this bias can destabilize consumers' world view. John (lines 1-39), for example, used to read human rights violation reports of B'tselem, as a teenager. Although at the time these reports did not make him seriously consider not enlisting in the military, the knowledge they provided him with expanded his perspective beyond the Zionist one and made him more receptive to critical thinking about Israeli policies in the conflict.

However, a more effective exposure to information provided by NGOs comes by working for one. The most significant influence of working for an NGO, says Omer (lines 136-155), came from understanding that "*everything is connected*" – social issues, internal Jewish fissures between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After his military service, John (lines 124-133) was not affiliated with any specific NGO, although he tried to keep up to date with some periodic publications of B'tselem. All this changed after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, when he decided he had to become more involved and active. This decision prompted him to join a local branch of a prominent international human rights NGO, allowing him to explore some universal values he always felt he supported but never followed through in actual political action.

Shmulik (lines 243-254), who mastered Arabic from an early age, was asked to join the establishment of one of the first human rights NGOs in Jerusalem. At the time, he did not think of it as a leftist NGO nor of himself as politically leftist. However, with time, and following articles he used to write for a local newspaper, people started addressing him as a leftist, which made him realize that he had had changed his views considerably without being aware of having done so.

Tomer (lines 327-353), who had worked in several human rights NGOs, remembers the first one he worked for. In his position, he would receive complaints from Palestinians on human rights violations. Beyond better-known human rights violations such as beating, shooting at Palestinians or cases of looting, his job exposed him to the structure of the occupation – its bureaucracy and how, supposedly non-violently, it prevented the Palestinian people from freedom and living normally. In the next NGO Tomer worked for, he found himself developing strong empathy for Palestinian civilians who were caught in cross fire during operation Casting Lead<sup>40</sup> (lines 372-406). This kind of empathy was probably nowhere to be found among other Israeli Jews at the time.

Similarly to Tomer, Gal describes how he started to work as a public relations manager for a major human rights NGO and the process he went through:

*I went through a very significant process there. I was politically aware just enough to want to work there but that was just the starting point of a much deeper and longer process. I think that at least part of the transformation I experienced resulted from being there during the second Intifada: the extent of exposure I had to the occupation, and what it really meant. In some sense, my job was to discover – learning and understanding by exposing myself to it and then making others aware of it as well, especially those who didn't want to learn about it (Gal, lines 393-400).*

Thus, for Gal information played a two-fold role in his process of transformation. The first was his unmediated exposure to reality involved in the Israeli occupation, and the second was his formulating and processing that information to make it accessible to the Israeli public, a mission which he admits the NGOs sector had failed in (Gal, lines 471-472).

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<sup>40</sup> This Israeli military operation in the Gaza strip in 2008, also known as the Gaza War, was the deadliest until then, in terms of Palestinian civilians wounded and killed by the IDF (Chossudovsky, 2009).

*Academic studies.* The Israeli academic system, which is not subject to the official ministry of education in its curricula, provides completely different knowledge to its students, says Yaron. Various issues such as refugees suddenly became vital for him in his tertiary studies:

*... This entire issue of the Palestinians – I was shocked how it was overlooked all these years [by my high school curriculum] ... I couldn't understand why I didn't learn about it in high school ... For instance, this whole matter of the deportation of refugees, and I'm not even talking about the question whether it was an escape or deportation but the mere fact that there were refugees. The only thing I was taught all those years [in the primary and secondary educational system] was that they simply hated us because we are Jewish, taken as a fact that this is anti-Semitism – plain and simple – Arabs hate Jews because Arabs are bad. Even in the military it's quite astonishing – you don't understand the meaning of the term refugees. You hear on the news about refugee camps – I never bothered to ask what the term 'refugee' means, or where exactly they came from (Yaron, lines 283-290).*

Similarly, Tomer (lines 191-199) remembers reading materials exposing him to the Palestinian point of view, which he had no access to or knowledge of before his academic studies.

**Critical thinking.** However important knowledge is, it seems that merely learning new facts is not enough. The other component of mind-changing is acquiring alternative frames of understanding, which can put both existing and newly-acquired information in a coherent order. In this regard, the most important effect of critical thinking, which contributed to the process of transformation, is that an adequate critical framework - one that 'makes all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place', in the words of Jonny (line 503) – provides a comprehensive explanation to all open questions and that makes sense, unlike the

Zionist narrative, which felt partial and incomplete. Thus, understanding that “*everything is interconnected*” – Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Ashkenazi-Mizrachi social fissure, secular-religious tensions, socio-economic gaps – all of these were explained as aspects of the same social structures, Zionist ideology and Israeli practices (Jonny, lines 685-700; Omer, (lines 149-155) or, in the words of Yaron (lines 278-281): “*critical thinking helped me put things that I knew intuitively into a conceptual context*”, to give them names.

***Intermediaries of critical thinking.*** Much like acquiring new information, critical thinking also requires intermediaries that make it accessible to the target group and allow it to overcome its own conventions and basic assumptions:

*Academic studies.* Similarly to acquiring knowledge, a significant agent of critical thinking is academia. However, not every discipline is equally critical. Shmulik (lines 174-191), who later acquired a PhD in history, remembers his undergraduate studies being conducted by a very conservative department. Looking back, his impression was that hardly any of his studies incorporated ideas taken from critical schools of thought and so, rather than improving his understanding of history, he feels that he spent the time accumulating positivist knowledge without a thorough understanding of what it really meant.

Unlike Shmulik’s study of history, students of social sciences had much more exposure to critical thinking (Yaron, lines 260-263). Lior (lines 250-255), who studied social psychology, received his critical tools from learning about inter-group relations and cultures of conflict by Bar-Tal, among others, which later served him well, as he became a dialogue-group facilitator. Another critical discipline which played an important transformative role was sociology. The book, *Being Israeli*, of which the theoretical framework is reviewed in chapter two, exposed Gil (lines 315-335) to the application of post-colonial theory in the Israeli context, critically analysing not only the Israeli occupation in 1967 but also the Zionist movement as a whole. At first, Gil admitted that these readings

engendered some discomfort in him, as they raised questions about many of his basic assumptions concerning the Zionist project. However, with time, he felt that his political views were starting to shift, as he slowly digested these critical approaches.

In his undergraduate studies, Tomer (lines 170-201) took a combination of political studies and cinema and television studies. This combination provided him with a new and multilevel understanding of Israeli ideology and policies. As a political science student, he recalls reading not only about the Palestinian Nakba, which he generally knew of beforehand, but also about the military rule which, as Israeli citizens, Palestinians were subject to until 1966, land confiscations, restrictions on freedom of movement, Israeli usage of Palestinian collaborators and so forth. Specifically, Tomer remembers reading in a book by the scholar Ian Lustick, a quote of Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president, who, when learning about the extent and numbers of Palestinian refugees expelled from Israel, responded by saying that this realizes the purpose of Zionism. At the same time, as a student of media studies, Tomer learned about the way Israeli cinema served the Zionist narrative, how landscape images excluded Palestinians as much as possible and so on. Thus, from the point of core values of the IDF, which Tomer had absorbed during his military service, this exposure led him to understand, and later to adopt, ideologically critical views of Zionism.

Dan, also a political science student, was influenced by writings on the social contract and its implications for civil disobedience, the way he sees it:

*One of the things [in the modern state] is that people are making an agreement with the state – a social contract. You do not have to keep your side of the agreement but you know you might be punished for not keeping it ... but I think that you are entitled to rights before you are obligated by duties. I mean, it is my right to live in the state. I pay social security fees for my own personal safety. Now, these duties don't serve goals I believe to be right and so it affects my obligation to fulfil them. The*

*implication of this is that I need to ask myself whether I still need to serve in the military, [if I don't agree with this service] At first, my answer was positive but as time passed I started to look at it more negatively ... In that sense, my studies provided me with the conceptual framework to understand what my duty as a citizen is and from there I took it to the personal level (Dan, lines 210-244).*

*Public figures, teachers and writers.* Many names of public figures, writers and teachers are mentioned by the participants as the motivation for them to critically rethink their own basic assumptions. Of these, it is important to mention several, as they are seen as strongly influential by providing moral support for the process of transformation. The first was the late Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who despite never encouraging anyone specifically to object, had established a moral and theoretical foundation for COs in Israel (Gal, lines 80-84). Gal remembers how, as a high school student, he used to visit Prof. Leibowitz's home to hear from him about CO.

For Itamar (lines 413-455; 693-698), a life-changing experience was when he read the book *A National Reckoning* by Boas Evron (1988), whom he met later in person. This book, says Itamar, which lays the foundation for the Canaanism movement, gave him an entirely new perspective on Israeli reality and on the possibility of imagining an alternative reality with no divisions between the Jewish and Arab inhabitants of the land. For him, what made the difference was the combination of reading this book and the encounter with his fellow student at the university library. This combination led him to reflect on his role in the military, which was essentially "*planning ghettos for civilian population*" (Itamar, line 423).

Other participants mentioned were Benny Morris (1987)<sup>41</sup>, a historian and the author of the book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Yaron, lines 260-271), Yitzhak Laor, a poet and the teacher of Isaac in his screenwriter studies (Isaac, lines 184-194), Dov Chenin, a member of the Hadash party, whose words Aaron (lines 291-327) describes as powerful enough to change his entire world view, as for the first time in his life he heard a Jewish politician speaking of Palestinians with compassion, respect, and most importantly, with hope for a better future for both peoples.

Opotow, Gerson, and Woodside (2005) make several recommendations for peace education, which correspond with the findings in this section. First, they argue that “students need to actively participate in their education” (Opotow et al., 2005, p. 311), which is part of the notion of *binge learning* and the active role that one should take in seeking information. Second, they claim that in order to be effective, peace education should avoid unrealistic and romantic images of tranquil peace and instead “it should capture the dynamic and pressing nature of social tensions and mobilize this urgency to re-examine social arrangements that institutionalize inequality and injustice” (Opotow et al., 2005, p. 311). Such an approach to peace education corresponds well with the search for a critical thinking framework, described by the participants, which can provide a more coherent explanation for their doubts and questions.

Regarding the stage of *destabilization*, several references in the literature consider destabilization as an opening stage in transformative processes, of which two can be adopted to understand the participants’ cognitive transformation. The first relates to Mezirow’s *transformative learning theory* (Mezirow, 2006). In his work on action research, Sanger

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<sup>41</sup> Ironically, despite his influence on many others in Israel to adopt critical views on Zionism, Benny Morris himself expressed more than once his opinion that the expulsion of Palestinians from Israel during the 1948 war was justified (See, for example: Kimmerling, 2004).



(1990) points to the difference between articulated and unarticulated levels of knowledge. These two levels function similarly to the one used here: information (the articulated level) and critical thinking or framework (the unarticulated level). In order to enable a meaningful change through learning, argues Sanger, the deeper, unarticulated level needs to be disturbed through “a gradual and protected examination and destabilization of their internal core” (Sanger, 1990, p. 175). In other words, acquiring new information and new frames of understanding interact in a process of transformative learning, but it is the conventional frames of understanding that have to be destabilized so that new information can be accepted.

The second use of destabilization as an opening phase to transformation is presented by Cobb (2006) in her approach to *narrative mediation*. According to Cobb, “conflict narratives function rigidly to maintain, if not increase, polarization. Accordingly, turning points that generate positive change would need to destabilize the core features of a conflict narrative (character roles, plots, and moral themes)” (Cobb, 2006, p. 161). In her analysis of conflicts, Cobb refers to narratives developed by parties as resilient to change and modification in the face of contradictory information, as the basic assumption of one’s own goodness, as opposed to the other’s malevolence, remains unchallenged. This reflects the type of reasoning around which the *ultimate attribution error* centres (Pettigrew, 1979). Therefore, continues Cobb (2006), the conflict narratives of each of the disputing parties have to be destabilized, in order to transform the relations between them. One of the main tools, which Cobb suggests, is irony, which “generates multiple meanings and, in so doing, generates instability, partiality, and incompleteness. It confronts (indirectly) and destabilizes the hegemonic power of narrative and opens new positions in discourse” (Cobb, 2006, p. 179). Such destabilization through irony can, for example, challenge the Zionist narrative, according to which every Israeli use of power is a last resource applied only in response to

aggressive Palestinian actions. An ironic view on this narrative reveals that, from the historical perspective of the endless action-and-reaction chain of violence, Israeli conduct can just as easily and reasonably be seen as the one triggering the Palestinian actions, rather than responding to them. This view can destabilize Israeli-Jewish conventions, and in fact does so, according to the reports of many of the participants, as it illuminates them in a different light: that they are identity-related rather than absolute truths.

Interestingly, both *transformative learning theory* and Cobb's concept of destabilization suggest that in order to allow the absorption of new information, fundamental assumptions and frameworks need to be destabilized. In contrast, in many of the participants' stories, it was new or additional information that needed to be acquired first so that incompatibilities between the national narrative and the reality of the occupation could surface. It was only then that engaging in critical thinking became relevant, having a more substantial basis of knowledge to build on.

### **Ambivalence**

The stronger the doubts grew among the participants, the harder it was for them to carry on in their military duty. However, they still held onto their inherent values and beliefs that they should contribute to society through military service and strive to excel in their military roles, and that both the state and the military generally act in good faith (Itamar, lines 280-315; Sil'i, 2002).

It seems that the emergence of new information and critical views were not sufficient to push participants towards objection to military service (Itai, lines 12-15). The result of this duality between loyalty and increasing discomfort with the surrounding context created for many participants a second, liminal stage, in which they were playing for both teams, so to speak. That is, they were still fully engaged in their military service but doing so half-heartedly.

Carlos (lines 162-169), a reserve duty soldier during the first Intifada, and Uri (lines 61-68), a compulsory duty soldier, remember their doubts about their service. On the one hand, they were simply scared by the implications of objecting - military prison. Their parents tried to dissuade them from objecting, saying that they would be the only objectors in prison and might be harassed, and that they might suffer additional sanctions in their future civilian lives. In contrast, as stories about military action in the OPT were being published, Carlos's reluctance to serve there grew stronger, and for Uri, the deterrence prison posed was only temporary until he also could not bear the idea of being a soldier any longer.

Aaron (lines 440-443) describes the ambivalent phase as completely absurd. As a mandatory duty soldier, he participated in a demonstration against one of the IDF's operations in the Gaza Strip. This demonstration was organized by the organization Combatants for Peace organization, which directly objected to the government's policies and the military actions in the Gaza Strip. However, when the demonstration ended he went back to his military base, where his job was to issue radio transmitters to the units fighting in the Strip. Similarly, Itai (lines 146-151) describes the daily dissonance between taking part in demonstrations during weekend leave from his military service and heated political arguments he had with other soldiers. But, at the same time, he kept telling himself he could influence the situation as a petty officer, at least in his immediate surroundings.

Isaac (lines 397-412) remembers a recurring dream he started to have when he already became a CO. In his dream, there was a war, which he wanted to take part in, but he suddenly remembered that it was not okay – that he was an objector. So, he was supposed to get out of it, but the inner conflict was strong, because taking part in military action felt so good. When asked about his interpretation of this dream, Isaac thinks that it is about the conflict between his super-ego, the moral component of his psyche, and his Id, that is, his

desire to be there, or in his words: “*you forbid yourself to do something you desire*” (Isaac, line 410).

Ricardo, on the other hand, explains how he felt during this phase and the outcome of gradual detachment from his identity, as a soldier:

*I spent all my service in a state of dissonance. On the one hand, I was an excellent soldier. I was even awarded a medal of honour. You can't say I was doing a sloppy job. I came there to do the best job I could ... On the other hand, I did experience dissonance because I was wearing uniform and was a soldier. It was very clear to me what we were doing there. That everything I did contributed to the military effort and to the maintenance of the IDF as an occupying force and a corrupting entity within Israeli society. And I was totally against that. So, in that respect, you can say that on the emotional level, I was completely alienated from the military. My military service didn't contribute to my own identity* (Ricardo, lines 224-230).

Thus, in the phase of ambivalence, several factors counterbalanced the criticism of military duty: fear of punishment and sanctions; commitment and loyalty to the military and state; daily routine, which may predominate over the unknown involved in disrupting it; and the inner desire to remain a part of everything – the social framework of the military unit, and the high self-esteem which accompanies a soldier's role.

As more reasons to refuse accumulate, the delicate balance between reasons to object and reasons to remain in service were upset. At this point, as objecting was still very intimidating to many of the participants, they started to look for excuses not to object. These excuses took the form of justifications of their present status. However, they are excuses in that, from today's perspective, the participants don't think they genuinely believed in, but rather hung on to them to keep them from taking the step towards the act of objection.

Alternatively, some others feel they were just not ready yet or that their understanding of reality was not comprehensive (Nir, lines 482-491).

Aaron describes the many questions he was struggling with:

[At that point] *I was still in the military, just in a non-combatant capacity.*

[Absorbed with] *all these questions like "But what would we do without the military?" and "If I get out of this, what does it say about me?" Understanding that there is an occupation or that there is wrong-doing is not enough to draw final conclusions. The IDF is still the Defence Force, it still defends and it's still vital. Although it is possible it is doing some things that are wrong, it is still needed ... [at some point] I realized that I need more answers so I called a famous CO and I asked him all these questions. For instance, what would be the implications for security? Why is it okay? Would the state of Israel become extinct if everyone objected and there would be no IDF? ... I still found it hard to release myself from this fear*  
(Aaron, lines 394-398, 506-514).

For many, including Aaron, the answer to this question was, for a long while, that with all of their reservations, it was still better for the Palestinians that the person manning the checkpoint would be them and not some other soldiers who would not be as concerned with Palestinian human rights as they were (Gil, lines 279-280; Tomer, lines 139-153).

Thus, the phase of excuses has two implications. First, there is still some way to go from the point at which one does not have any good reasons to keep doing what he is doing but nevertheless prefers the current situation, however morally uncomfortable it is for him, to taking action and changing the status quo. It seems, then, that preserving socially acceptable conduct doesn't require strong conviction, whereas changing this conduct, even for very good reasons, requires both conviction and determination, in the face of expected consequences.

The stage of ambivalence strongly demonstrates how *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1962) threatens one's own self-perception and the implications of this threat. Such reaction is, in fact, very natural. Tsang (2002) defines *moral rationalization* as: "an individual's ability to reinterpret his or her immoral actions as, in fact, moral. It arises out of a conflict of motivations and a need to see the self as moral" (p. 25). Thus, when an individual realizes that her or his conduct is immoral, according to their own values, instead of modifying or rejecting that conduct, they prefer to engage in moral rationalization.

Building on Tsang's argument, Mercier (2011) suggests that moral deliberation with other people who have different views can result in making better moral judgements and decisions, especially when this deliberation is carried out in a private setting, when one is more open to consider new ideas without fear for her or his social status. However, it seems that it is not just any person that the participants were willing to engage in moral deliberation with. It required a certain setting such as an NGO or academic studies context, and the partners for this deliberation had to be respected by the participants or even admired.

### **Ripening**

As time passes, the questions that arise during the ambivalent phase are gradually answered for the participants and the complete picture starts to emerge. For Isaac, seeing the entire picture made all the difference:

*The rationale of the process goes like this. At first, there is something wrong only at this end – but the rest of the picture is fine. If at this end we will just return the OPT, it will all be fine. And then, in 2006 the second Lebanese war started in the north and during this time no one noticed that some 2,000 people were killed in Gaza. And then I started connecting things. If at first my theory was that there are local problems, which don't relate to each other, I started listening to what the Palestinians say and realized that these are not merely local problems – that this*

*entire state is rooted in a power mechanism which aims to maintain Jewish superiority in all aspects of life: financial, military power, demography and so forth* (Isaac, lines 345-362).

As Sergey (lines 186-196) became more deeply involved and informed about the Post-Camp David II peace talks' period, his conclusion was, unlike that of the people around him, that a resolution was becoming less attainable mainly because of the Israeli approach. Therefore, he continued, he felt that by serving in the OPT he provided Israeli politicians with the option to maintain the occupation rather than end it. And so, the excuse that *"it is better that I serve there than anyone else"* lost its appeal when he realized that his ability to influence the situation, even if only for the Palestinians crossing his checkpoint, was practically non-existent (Sergey, lines 199-211).

Similarly, Itamar, (lines 455-464) came to realize that it was not the Oslo accords that mattered. What mattered was the fact that military rule was enforced over a civilian population and regardless of how enlightened and sensitive this rule might be, it was unacceptable as a matter of principle.

For Carlos, the first Intifada was the turning point after which he could no longer justify the occupation as he realized that Israel had trapped the Palestinians:

*One of the things Israel used to say about the Palestinians is that they don't rebel because they are happy with their situation. But then, when they did rebel, Israel starts to claim against their hatred, their incitement, that they want all the land. And then at some point I thought hold on, when they don't rebel Israel says that the occupation can go on because they are happy and don't rebel, yet when they do rebel Israel says that they rebel because they hate all Jews and want to terminate the state. This is a very basic contradiction because what it actually means is that no*

*matter what they do, they will always be the ones to blame ... this realization transformed my understanding of the situation* (Carlos, lines 363-386).

In sum, the cognitive aspect of the transformation process is gradual and involves learning new information, critically and systematically reviewing the reasoning and the causality one attributes to the parties in the conflict, and introspection of how and where one should position oneself in that reality, now that he sees it differently.

The stage of cognitive ripening suggests that *moral rationalization* (Tsang, 2002) has its boundaries and that when the discrepancies between reality and moral reasoning become too large, bridging them no longer serves the purpose of maintaining consistency and preserving self-esteem. While remaining within the borders of the cognitive mode, it is still not clear what makes these discrepancies too strong for some people and not for others. However, the conceptual scope can be expanded to the social mode of transformation, which is the focus of the next section and views the stage of ambivalence in a completely different light. Integrating the cognitive and the social transformation modes suggests that while superficially the ambivalence stage appears to be a reaction to the destabilization, in fact it is a transition phase towards ripening, in which the participants were desperately looking for an alternative moral community which could accommodate them and allow them to complete the process of transformation.

The notion of *ripeness* as a final stage of transformation was introduced by Zartman (2000); (Zartman, 2008; Zartman & Faure, 2005), who defined ripeness for a peace agreement as the moment at which the parties have reached a “mutually hurting stalemate” (Zartman, 2000, p. 228). Although Zartman referred to large scale conflicts and by parties he had in mind societies, states and leaderships, there are two principles that could also be applied to individual level transformation. First, Zartman’s definition implies that one trigger for ripeness is the realization that force alone leads nowhere and that an alternative

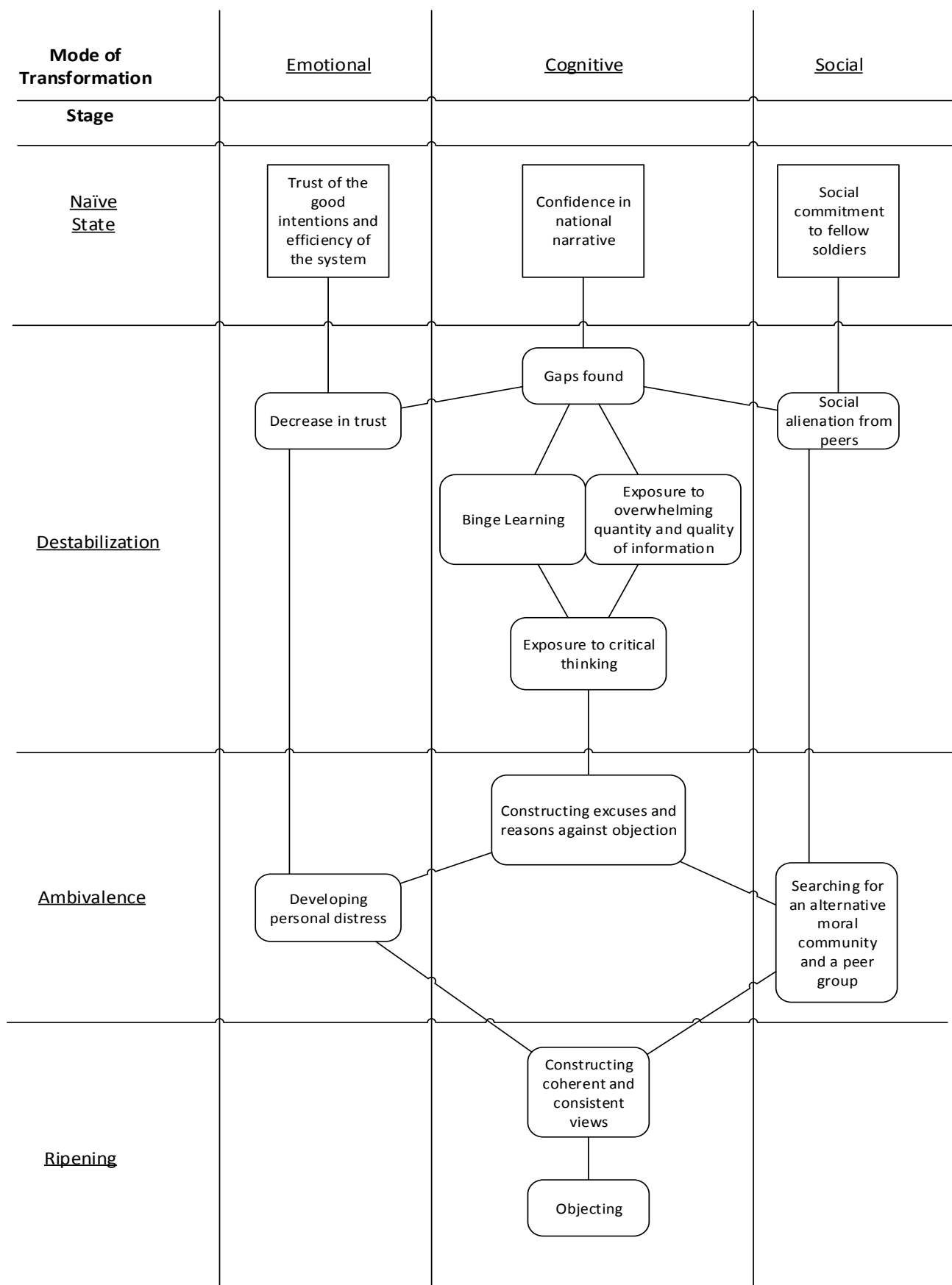


collaborative option of resolution should be pursued. Second, the pain that each of the parties feels exceeds any possible benefits they may see from the continuation of the conflict, which is equivalent to the personal stress described in the section on the emotional mode of transformation. This personal stress, combined with being accepted by an alternative moral community are the two accompanying components to the cognitive dimension, as an individual becomes determined to object.

### **Summary**

The process of transformation emerging from the participants' stories hinges on the cognitive mode. However, the cognitive mode of transformation does not sufficiently describe the overall process and cannot stand alone as an explanatory model, without the emotional and social modes integrated into its stages. Figure 3 illustrates the integrative process of transformation, with a verbal explanation following.

Figure 4. An Integrative Model of Transformation.



The baseline state is a naïve one, in which the individual is confident of his worldview and national narrative, which he acquired through socialization in his family, peer group and the Israeli educational system. Three stages have been identified in the cognitive mode of transformation. The first stage in this process is destabilization, which takes place when a gap opens between one's own national narrative and the actions that are actually found taking place on behalf of that narrative. This gap triggers a pursuit for answers in the form of acquiring new information and exposure to critical thinking, which may provide better understanding of this gap.

The second stage of ambivalence is triggered by the anxiety of the person arising from the individual's inevitable conclusion of the newly acquired information and understanding of the political reality, that in order to be consistent with his own values, he must refuse to take part in military action. Thus, as a reaction, during the stage of ambivalence, the individual engages in reasoning and an internal dialogue which is aimed at justifying his actions as a soldier, rather than rebelling against the system.

The third stage of ripening occurs when the individual has been able to develop a coherent world view capable of sufficiently explaining all his disturbing findings about reality.

The emotional and social modes of transformation interact with the cognitive one in its different stages. The emotional mode, in which destabilization causes a decrease in the trust of the individual in the good intentions of both the IDF and the government. Later, during the cognitive ambivalence stage, the emotional mode manifests itself through personal distress as the individual does not manage to justify his actions as a soldier.

The social mode of transformation comes into effect at the first stage of alienation from the peer group, as its members do not share the same concerns the individual has or even sanction him for expressing them. Following this, the individual begins to seek

alternative social groups, either ones which can endorse his political doubts, or one of people in a similar situation, who can function as a support group. Finding such an alternative group and its willingness to accept the individual allows him to move from the ambivalence stage to the ripening one.

The next chapter presents and discusses the participants' own reflections on the process they underwent.

## Chapter 9: Findings - Reflections on the Process

This chapter presents the participants' reflections on the process of transformation as a whole and general insights on the process of transformation from a macro perspective.

### Reflections on the Process of Transformation

After going through their entire life stories, each participant was asked an identical question which aimed to see how the participants understood the general process of transformation they experienced. The question was designed to check the level of transformation they felt they underwent - if today they perceive themselves as different persons in their values and beliefs from the person they were at the time they first enlisted or if they feel they are essentially the same person, only with broader knowledge about and understanding of the world. The question was phrased in the following way:

*I will now describe to you three different types of transformation narratives and ask you to say which one captures, or is the closest to, the process you feel you experienced. Or, where would you place yourself on the continuum of transformation that these narratives describe?*

*The first narrative: When you look at yourself today in comparison to the young man you were when you enlisted, you feel these are two entirely different people. Each of you had different values, different sets of priority, and understanding of the world. If you had an opportunity to speak with this young man, to tell him everything that happened to you and everything you know today, he would probably have not understood you or agree with you, and certainly not imagine himself acting in the future the way you did.*

*The second narrative: Looking back at the person you were at the time of your enlistment, you feel you are essentially the same person. Both of you hold the same values, have similar sets of priorities, and the same beliefs. The difference between*

*us is what I learned about the real world, about what is happening in the OPT in a way that is very different from what I thought before. And so, if I had a chance to talk to that young man and tell him everything I learned and know, he would also object instead of enlisting.*

*The third narrative: As in the second narrative, you and your younger self are essentially the same person. However, the thing that changed is the outside political and social reality (for example, the assassination of PM Yitzhak Rabin and the end of the Oslo accords) and so, if you had a chance to tell him what you know now, he would say that at the time you enlisted that was the right thing to do but also, that considering the political developments you told him about, your objection was the right thing to do when you did it.*

In this question, the first narrative describes a fundamental change in self-perception, the second describes a relatively stable yet adaptable self-perception, and the third, a rigid self-perception, which attributes all changes to the surrounding society and insists on self-consistency. Each participant was asked to position himself on this continuum.

### **What Did Not Change**

**The morality conundrum.** The most striking and perhaps puzzling finding on the responses to this question is the absence of evidence for any moral transformation in all participants' view. Although sporadically, there are indications for moments of realization of Palestinian's subjectivity, following the ideas of Lévinas (Lévinas, 1989; Lévinas, 1985), such as in the case of Itamar and his Palestinian friend from school, participants deny they have undergone a moral transformation, when asked directly about it.

This finding is puzzling because, while not identifying a transformation in their values, all participants objected for moral reasons. All participants say they were brought up on humanistic values, the same ones that actually led them to object (Lior, lines 424-428).

The only participant who was willing to consider moral transformation as something he might have gone through is Tomer (lines 636-665). On the one hand, he says, he was always a sensitive and attentive person, always seeking justice and meaning, which undoubtedly played an important part in his decision to object. On the other hand, he enlisted in the military explicitly to defend Israel and he saw his military service as an ethical mission. Had he had the chance to talk with his younger self, he would probably have not been able to convince this other part of him, as they are both driven by different values, but he is positive it could have been a fascinating conversation.

Two explanations of this moral conundrum are possible: consideration of the absence of moral transformation, and for the inability of participants to identify and report them.

***Absence of moral transformation.*** Abelson (1988), followed by Rosen and Salomon (2011), differentiates between central beliefs and peripheral ones. Central beliefs are “beliefs [which] take a central place in the consensually held framework of the collective narrative” (Rosen & Salomon, 2011, p. 137). Typical central beliefs, convictions or ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000b) are those relating to superiority, injustice, vulnerability, distrust and helplessness (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003) or beliefs about security, the justness of one’s own goals, victimization of one’s own society, and delegitimization of the rival (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). Peripheral beliefs, on the other hand, are those that are not related to core assumptions regarding identity or legitimacy. Several studies examining the ability to influence core beliefs versus peripheral beliefs (Ron & Maoz, 2013; Rosen & Perkins, 2013; Rosen & Salomon, 2011) found that core or central beliefs are very hard to change through educational intervention, while peripheral ones are affected relatively easily. Applying this result to the present study positions core values as parallel to central beliefs, which may

explain why practically none of the participants identified a moral transformation within themselves.

***Failure to identify or report moral transformation.*** Two other possible explanations consider an epistemological option, according to which moral transformation may have taken place, but the participants did not identify it or preferred not to report it. Firstly, participants may have an unusual commitment to care for others or the community, or in the words of Hart and Fegley (1995), they are *care exemplars*. Among other things, in their study, Hart and Fegley (1995) found that care exemplars, in comparison to other people, view themselves as having closer continuity to their pasts and futures and think of themselves as incorporating their ideals and parental images. Similarly, Youniss and Yates (1999) suggest that everyday morality is rooted in an essential moral identity rather than being mediated by calculated reason. Thus, moral actions are seen as a result of inherent moral tendencies rather than a consequence of moral reasoning.

Another theoretical consideration follows from the literature, emphasizing the importance of personal consistency (Festinger, 1962; Greenwald & Ronis, 1978). In their research on the connection between types of neurodegeneration and perceived change in identity, Strohming and Nichols (2015) found that injury to the moral faculty plays the primary role in identity discontinuity. Heiphetz, Strohming, and Young (2016) similarly found that people associate moral change to identity change. Since perceived change in identity contradicts the need for consistency (Greenwald & Ronis, 1978), this may explain why participants were not eager to report moral transformation.

Finally, Newman, Bloom, and Knobe (2014) suggest that people usually perceive their true self as fundamentally good. Thus, when describing behaviours which are considered to be morally virtuous, people are more likely to attribute them to their intrinsic positive moral identity than to behaviours they normally disapprove of. In the case of the



participants in this study, this argument suggests that the participants' decision to object is interpreted by them as a reflection of their own innate virtuous true self rather than an end-point of a process of moral transformation.

**The empathy absence.** Another expected component of transformation, which manifested itself very infrequently in the participants' stories, was empathy for Palestinians. Although several participants felt pity for Palestinians, their emotional response was always described in a very reserved manner and empathy was hardly ever mentioned as a trigger for transition or for an act of objection. Here, again, the only exception is Tomer, whose act of objection was emotionally triggered (Tomer, lines 225-241) and throughout his story, empathy for Palestinians' pain and suffering was dominant as a political motivator (Tomer, lines 352-353; 424-429).

As mentioned above (Fischer & Good, 1997), male socialization processes involve suppression of men's ability to express emotions. Ronald Levant (1998) discusses the different consequences of emotional suppression. Two of the implications he specifies may explain, in part, why empathy is not more evident in the participants' stories as might have been expected. First, Levant argues that rather than expressing empathy emotionally and verbally, men tend to express it through action. Thus, while not verbally expressing their empathy, the act of objection can be interpreted as a gesture or expression of compassion. Second, men are more prone to develop *normative alexithymia*, namely reduction of emotional experiences to the extent that they can be hardly identified, even by the men themselves. This is even stronger for sensations of vulnerability. Instead, men may experience such emotions physically in pains, stress or disengagement, which also relates to Hoffman's concept of *empathic overarousal* (Hoffman, 2008), suggesting that overwhelming feelings of empathy may trigger reversed responses of emotional disengagement.

Additionally, the notion of COs' alternative masculinity perception, presented in chapter 7, includes the adoption of a feminist outlook. However, the rare mention of empathy and the self-interested emotional focus on personal stress suggest that, emotionally speaking, most of the participants remained within the premise of traditional masculine emotional limits, and did not exhibit tendencies for care and empathy (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1996; Tronto, 1987) such as the ones they claim to have adopted.

### **Modes of Transformation**

What did participants think had changed in them, on the macro level?

**Identity and social identification.** Most often, participants who talk about changes in their identity referred to social circles that they identified with. Barney (lines 22-27) thinks that the main transition he underwent was related to his social identification and to self-perception in regard to his own identity. Itai (lines 348-360) and Dan (lines 321-322) provides an explanation of what this might mean. According to their narratives, each of them felt that they had an inner objection to contemporary political realities but, at the same time, had conformed to social norms and group pressure and so their processes of transformation consisted of finding new reference groups who would support the attitudes they had all along.

Isaac interprets this idea in a more radical manner, suggesting that his initial values and identity were formed entirely in accordance to his preferred social group, as an adolescent who is in a constant search for social acceptance and approval. However, as he grew older, the process of maturation involved increasing self-confidence to develop an autonomous ideology and political world view even if it meant jeopardizing his social status.

Shmulik (lines 454-471) describes the social expectation and pressure as a continuous temptation he had to overcome. Although his social circles consisted of radical

left-wing activists, he still considers the right-wing, and specifically the religious right-wing, as a community with a shared sense of purpose and mission to which he aspires to belong, but cannot because the ethical price he would be required to pay would be too high. Thus, Shmulik, as with Isaac, Itai, and Dan, describes the process of transformation as overcoming the need for social affirmation, driven by increasing discomfort with the price they needed to pay to obtain it.

These descriptions of change in social identification are at variance with *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). While most participants, in accordance with this theory, changed their social affiliation to those that best serve their self-esteem, Shmulik's description suggests that, to some extent, the social transition that some of the participants experienced required them to pay a price by losing some of the advantages they saw in their former political and ideological group.

**Knowledge and understanding.** The great majority of participants, however, found the second narrative of transformation described in the question as the closest one to the process they feel they underwent.

For Nir (lines 654-668), Itamar (lines 652-676), Sergey (lines 439-453), John (lines 393-404) and Omer (lines 372-401), the process of transformation essentially consisted of the gradual accumulation of information, either by personal experience of, or reading about the political reality of the occupation in the OPT. When this new information was underpinned by a new and preferable framework for understanding the reality, the ground was set for the act of objection.

Aaron (lines 667-683) and Jonny (lines 902-995) feel that at their cores, they are still the same people and that the main changes they experienced were triggered by new information and consciousness of Palestinian oppression. However, for Aaron, this process required an ability or willingness to be influenced by these revelations and exposure to new

ideas. Jonny, on the other hand, first became politically active with the motivation to convince radical left-wing activists of his own moderate positions (for example, that military service is important), and for this reason he thinks his defence barriers against counter-arguments were active at first. However, although they made the process of transformation slower for him, eventually these shields were lifted and his position became closer to the people he initially disagreed with.

***Ideological or pragmatic thinking.*** Up to this point, the description of the cognitive mode of the transformative process has been limited to the period leading up to the act of objection. However, the process did not end at that point and, as we saw in the previous chapter in the section titled Attitudes Toward Zionism And Political Positions, when asked about their current views, some participants still identified themselves as Zionist while others had moved beyond the dividing line into the more universalist non-Zionist view. In theory, this dividing line between ideological thinkers who were willing to go a long way, looking for an ideological viewpoint of complete consistency between their humanist principles and their political implications, and pragmatists who were willing to settle for more socially accepted political stands, and to compromise what is just with what is attainable. Interestingly, however, hardly any participant sees himself as an ideological thinker, even those who take the most radical anti-Zionist standpoints.

Perhaps John is the only exception to this, as he is constantly searching for an uncompromising political group whose principles would be consistent with his own or, in his words: “*peeling tribal-particular layers from the agenda*” (John, lines 240-241) of the political group he is affiliated with, which eventually led to him joining the BDS movement. However, while John (lines 283-285) felt comfortable with anti-colonialist views, he still felt reluctant to participate in ideological movements as he thinks that “*all the great ideologies have been dismantled*” (John, line 276).

Apart from John, all other participants perceive themselves as complex and multi-dimensional in their political understanding. Carlos (lines 345-360), for example, a socialist political activist, feels closer to the approach suggesting that there is a fundamental contradiction between the Zionist and the democratic components of the state of Israel. However, he continues, this does not mean that the state has to be destroyed but rather, this contradiction needs to be flagged and presented to the Jewish population and adjustments made accordingly.

Both Gal (lines 727-736) and Uri (lines 432-443) find themselves active in organizations and collaborating with colleagues with whom they do not see eye to eye, politically speaking. Gal volunteered in a Zionist left-wing NGO, an orientation Gal did not relate to and in the past would not have been able to take part in. However, he later joined a specific project of that NGO which he found important and worthy, and was capable of doing this with all of his reservations about the Zionist identity of that NGO. Similarly, Uri, who was a leader of a trade union, found himself collaborating with colleagues with whom he did not share any political common ground.

Yet other participants felt they had a capacity, and perhaps an obligation, to build bridges between worlds, which also means relinquishing uncompromising political positions. Jonny (lines 602-664) felt that to some extent, he had never become fully committed to any social or political group. This was a social price he paid because it was very important for him to have access to different groups, in contrast to some of his friends from the radical left-wing, who lost any interest in contact with anyone who was a Zionist left-winger or more inclined to the right side of the political spectrum. Similarly, Lior (lines 263-268), a dialogue group facilitator, felt that he had a natural tendency to mediate, to see the complexities of the problems and work for change from within.

But perhaps the most significant expression of seeing complexities and relativities, rather than absolute truths comes from Shmulik, who describes himself as having a split identity, in that he can really see both sides. For this description, he coined the term *multi-focality*:

*It is a kind of split personality disorder. I can walk in the old city of Jerusalem and some guys I know from Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva<sup>42</sup>, who are just inserting a new Torah scroll in the synagogue, tell me “Come, Shmulik, join us” and I come and dance with them because at that moment I feel it too. And then I can go with guys of the Muslim Brotherhood to a mosque and listen to the reading of the Quran and sing together – and [at that moment] I am with them ... I think that more than looking for consistency, I concentrate on what I call multi-focality. Multi-focality is the ability to sympathize with settlers, with Kahanists<sup>43</sup>, with members of the Islamic Jihad Movement<sup>44</sup>, with Hamas members, with Fatah people, or with dialogue for peace workers. My intention is to try and understand all of them from within ... We have a very complex reality and I “take it upon myself” to reflect all its components. I clearly have more room for some components than for others. Obviously, I am more Jewish than anything else. Equally clearly, the right-wing people look on me as a leftist and the Arabs look on me as a Jew. I am well aware of that and fair enough – I accept that. Somehow, I feel I inhabit all the parties in the conflict. I know it may not make any sense but I feel accessible to all constituents. I was the settler in*

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<sup>42</sup> A Yeshiva which is affiliated with the Israeli religious extreme right-wing and is leading, among other things, the Jewish settlement efforts in the Muslim and Christian quarters of Jerusalem’s old city.

<sup>43</sup> Supporters of the legacy of Meir Kahane, an extreme right-wing leader who was assassinated in 1990 in the US by an Egyptian-born Muslim activist in what later became Al-Qaida.

<sup>44</sup> A Palestinian Islamist militant organization whose official objective is the destruction of the State of Israel.

*Sebastia<sup>45</sup>; I was the soldier standing at the checkpoint; I spent the night with people whose lands were confiscated to build settlements; I spent the night in a Palestinian house and was woken by soldiers who came to search that house. I mean, I have been everywhere* (Shmulik, lines 305-342).

In sum, reflecting on the process they underwent, hardly any participant feels his values have changed. Additionally, the emotional aspect of their transformation was quite limited and seldom acknowledged. Most participants, however, see the transformation they underwent as a cognitive one, consisting of acquiring new information and critical frameworks which gave a better and more comprehensive meaning to that knowledge. A few participants see this process as one of maturation, in which they were able to overcome social restrictions and follow their own conscience.

Although their acts of objection is considered extremely left-wing by Jewish-Israeli public opinion, the great majority of participants do not see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a clear cut one, to which they necessarily have all the answers. Rather, most of them see it in a complex way with each of the parties' narratives, claims and actions having value.

### **Summary**

In their own reflections on the process, hardly any participant felt he had undergone a transformation of values. Rather, most participants claim that their values remained stable throughout the process. Similarly, almost none of the participants experienced empathy as a trigger for change. Most participants consider the process of transformation a cognitive one, involving a change in their political knowledge and outlook.

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<sup>45</sup> The first Jewish settlement in the OPT near the Palestinian village Sebastia in 1975. Later it was named Elon Moreh, after the biblical city Elon Moreh, where God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, as described in the book of Genesis 12:7.

The next and concluding chapter discusses the findings of the study in regard to the research question, and the integrative model of transformation and its broader implications and applications in the practice of conflict transformation.



## Chapter 10: Discussion and Conclusions

Michael has completed a process of transformation. He has broadened his understanding and knowledge of the social and political realities in Israel, including the structures in place and practices involved in maintaining the occupation of the OPT, his social circles have changed and even his identity has been partly modified. But most importantly, he expressed this process of transformation by taking political action, for which he paid a price.

Is he a different person now? Probably not. In some ways, he has not changed. In other ways, however, he will probably be neither able nor willing to revert to being the same person he was.

What can be said about the process he underwent as a whole? What are the implications of this understanding for the practice of conflict intervention? Which questions remain unanswered or at least open for further research? These are the main concerns of the final chapter.

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This chapter opens with a discussion of the answers that the findings provide to the research question. The integrative transformation model is presented and its theoretical implications are discussed. Following this, practical implications for conflict intervention are discussed and suggestions for intervention design based on the findings of the study are made. Finally, further research topics are suggested.

### **The Research Question**

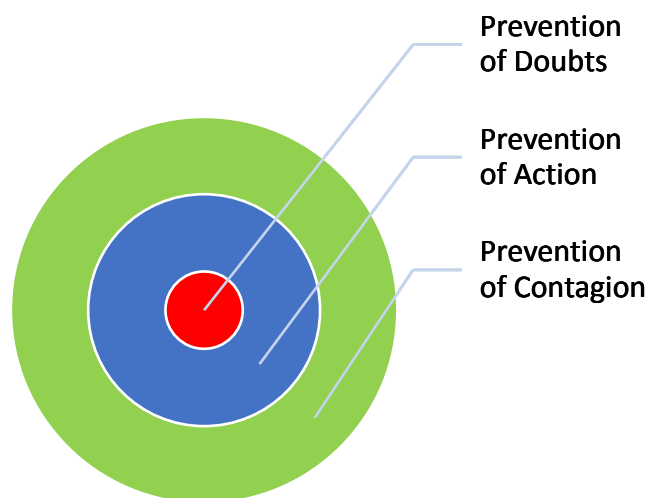
To recapitulate, this study addresses the following research question: what are the social and psychological mechanisms preventing conscientious objection, what enables some soldiers to overcome these barriers, and what is the nature of the transformation process they undergo, leading them to become conscientious objectors?

As noted in the introduction chapter, this research question has essentially two components: one focusing on the barriers to conscientious objection and the other focusing on the transformation process, which leads to the act of objection. In this section, each part of this question will be discussed separately.

### **Barriers to Conscientious Objection**

In chapter 2, based on a literature review, a three-layered model of obstructions to conscientious objection was presented, as shown in figure 5.

*Figure 5. Multi-Layered System for Prevention of Conscientious Objection.*



Generally speaking, the core, internal layer consists of psychological and social-psychological components, such as a need for group affiliation and identity, cognitive and emotional intergroup prejudices and in-group preference, resistance to contradictory information and so forth. In this layer, components of masculinity formation are included. The second layer consists of imposition by the peer-group and the military, such as social pressure, including compliance to peer pressure and to authority, *groupthink* and *groupshift*; structural components, such as isolation from civilian norms and life and the prospect of

sanctions for any act of dissent, and the military shaping individual behaviour as an *absolute institution*. The final layer is concerned with prevention of CO contagion by sanctions and punishments, both formal and informal, directed at COs, such as separating them from their military unit, imprisonment, labelling them as effeminate or homosexual, and excluding them from the *hypermasculine* ethos of soldiers.

The findings of this study reinforce much of this model and help to deepen our understanding of the challenges facing conscientious objectors. In addition to the factors reviewed in chapter two, the findings suggest that the following elements contributed to the challenges that the participants in this study faced in their transformation process in the three layers composing the barriers to conscientious objection.

**Prevention of doubts.** Overall, the components of the first layer, which were reviewed in chapter two were partially confirmed. A *culture of conflict* (Bar-Tal, 2013) was the principal factor in participants' perceptions of the political situation: in-group preference, although not necessarily out-group hostility and prejudice; deep conviction in the Israeli narrative, and as a result, typical attributes to the *ultimate attribution error* (Pettigrew, 1979) holding that by and large, Israeli intentions are peaceful and well-intentioned.

In addition to the reviewed components of this layer, several other findings emerge as significant barriers.

**Inherited moral values.** One of the very strong influences which were found to affect the participants' values were inherited moral values, those they received from their parents. As most of the participants come from mainstream Zionist left-wing political backgrounds, they grew up feeling confident in their politics and were not concerned with inconsistencies between their convictions and political reality, especially in the OPT. This

was also the result of the lack of acquaintance with Palestinians that almost all participants had prior to their military service.

Several studies refer to inherited moral values as obstacles to genuine moral consideration, as they are seldom updated over time and lag behind developments in political and social climates (Lopez-Garay, 2001; Steiner, 1992). Accordingly, it took most participants a considerably long period to start questioning their inherited moral values and the resulting politics. Thus, the influence of parents and family on shaping political views is strong and requires special motivation and considerable amount of time to review and modify.

***Early socialization processes.*** Another central component of this layer was early socialization processes, which demonstrate the strong influence that social and state structures, such as the school system and youth movements, have over children and youth in Israel. The absence of the Palestinian historical narrative from the school curriculum, public discourse and most mainstream media prevented the participants from critically assessing the traditional Zionist narrative they were brought up with. This narrative consists, in part, of the Jewish entitlement to the land of Israel (with intentionally vague definition of borders) and constant reaching out for peace with Israel's neighbouring Arab peoples in general and the Palestinians specifically, while the Palestinians keep refusing to do the same.

Much of the participants' early socialization involved a strong component of military preparation, whether motivational or physical. Additionally, a large proportion of their masculinity formation addressed the prospect of military service and its hypermasculine expectations and demands. This socialization process resulted in internalized motivation for military service, for both altruistic reasons as well as for self-development and promotion.

As noted by Stewart and Healy (1986), individuals' life stages and life history, as well as reference groups, frame peoples' perceptions of and involvement in politics. Among the participants, different social experiences emerged during their childhood and adolescence, and among those who experienced early social marginality, different coping mechanisms took place, ranging from 'insisting to belong' to giving up on central social positioning. Although participants did not directly link these experiences and their later act of objection, some literature suggests that such connections exist and should be further explored (Curtin, Stewart, & Duncan, 2010; Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Stewart & Healy, 1989; Stewart & McDermott, 2004).

**Prevention of action.** Group processes, such as *compliance with peer-pressure* and *groupthink* were found to be extremely effective in shaping attitudes and preventing or making it difficult for individuals to follow up on their doubts with further investigation and action. In fact, many participants say that the main difficulty they had in objecting was not patriotic sentiments, but rather the feeling that they would be betraying their fellow soldiers' trust and leaving them to do the work, which they were no longer willing to do.

In contrast, *compliance with authority* did not appear to be a very strong component in participants' narratives as a deterrent to objecting. This corresponds with notions of the IDF being a less authority-based military (except during basic training) in comparison to other militaries. Israeli adolescents losing respect for their parents' authority was identified by Omer (2010) as a primary educational problem which needs to be addressed systematically, as it reflects on youth's attitudes towards teachers and eventually other people. Interestingly, Omer suggests that parents adapt techniques used by non-violent activists, such as Mahatma Gandhi, to regain their authority and their children's respect (Weinblatt & Omer, 2008). One of the explanations for this crisis of authority in Israel may reflect the impact of the extensive Holocaust-related education activities which the

participants describe in their stories - as a counter-reaction to the central role *compliance with authority* played in the rise of the Nazi party to power in 1933 Germany (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Fromm, 1942; Halberstam, 1988).

On the structural level, participants' description of their military service, particularly during basic training, but also during their duty in the OPT, matches Goffman's analysis of *absolute institutions* and Zimbardo's insights into how these institutions socialize their members into obedient beings, whose individual moral considerations are overridden by the structure's agenda (Goffman, 1961; Zimbardo, 1974). However, it seems that regarding reserve duty soldiers, the structure of total institution and the deterrence effort made by the military decrease significantly, thus making structural barriers to objection in the post-mandatory service years not as effective as during mandatory service. This may explain, in part, why there are many more selective conscientious objectors among reserve duty soldiers than mandatory service soldiers.

In addition to the barriers of the second layer reviewed in chapter 2, participants mention two other factors obstructing objection to military service.

***System's flexibility.*** In contrast to the common perception of the military system as rigid and insensitive, many participants describe how they were offered alternatives within the military framework, ranging from exemptions from specific duties such as guarding at check-points to being transferred to other units, where service does not involve contact with Palestinian civilians or service in the OPT altogether. Some of the participants accepted these offers and others refused, but the flexibility of the system allowed it to keep at least some of them on active duty.

***Lack of awareness of the concept of objection.*** Strange as it may seem, lack of awareness of the concept of conscientious objection resulted in many participants not considering it a viable option, even when they were unhappy with their service in the OPT.

This can largely be attributed to the Israeli school system being entirely directed towards the needs of the IDF, as well as mainstream media, which most often abides by the Zionist narrative and the central role the IDF plays in it.

**Prevention of contagion.** The third layer of barriers to CO include measures taken by the military to minimize the demoralization which an objector might cause in his military unit and fellow soldiers. Among these measures, immediate removal from the unit and imprisonment were mentioned as the most effective measures for prevention of contagion.

Although both sanctions were mentioned by participants, they added another, which is perhaps the most effective one. With time, some participants noticed that they were being summoned less and less to service in the OPT. Naturally, in the military's calculations of cost and benefit, it seems entirely reasonable to stop calling reserve duty soldiers to service if it is foreseen that this would only lead to objection, imprisonment, media exposure and expense on the part of the IDF, while not producing any military benefits. This decision of not insisting on calling COs to reserve duty service not only cut the losses of the military but also eventually led to the end of activity of the NGO Courage to Refuse, since they had nothing to refuse to anymore.

In sum, the findings of this study strengthen our understanding of the barriers soldiers face in their path leading to conscientious objection. They emphasize the importance of family and early socialization processes in the development of values and political stance. Additionally, the findings shed light on some counter-intuitive measures of flexibility and non-persistence of the part of the military, which are found to be much more productive than measures of imposition and insistence.

### **The Process of Transformation**

The second part of the research question refers to the nature and characteristics of the process of transformation. As described in chapter 8, the findings illustrate an

interrelated process of transformation, which consists of three modes of transformation: cognitive, emotional and social. These will be described individually first, then integrated into one general model.

**The cognitive mode.** Detailed analysis of the processes of transformation, as it emerges from the participants' narratives, reveals that at the core of the process is the cognitive mode of transformation. This mode includes the acquisition of new and contradictory information to the participants' common knowledge of their national narrative. Additionally, it encompasses an introduction to critical thinking and critical frameworks of understanding. Critical thinking was found to provide a better and more comprehensive and consistent explanation to both specific events and daily reality that participants were exposed to, and to gaps between this and the rhetoric of good intentions they have been accustomed to hearing from both their military superiors and political leaders. Following this stage, an inner resistance to these ideas comes into play, as their implications involve more than the individual is willing to accept at that point. As a result, he starts to develop counter-arguments to justify his current position. Eventually, as the reality around him of the occupation-related military practices does not change and he keeps being ordered to act in ways he cannot agree with, the individual reconsiders his initial reservations, with the added information and critical thinking, and constructs a coherent view.

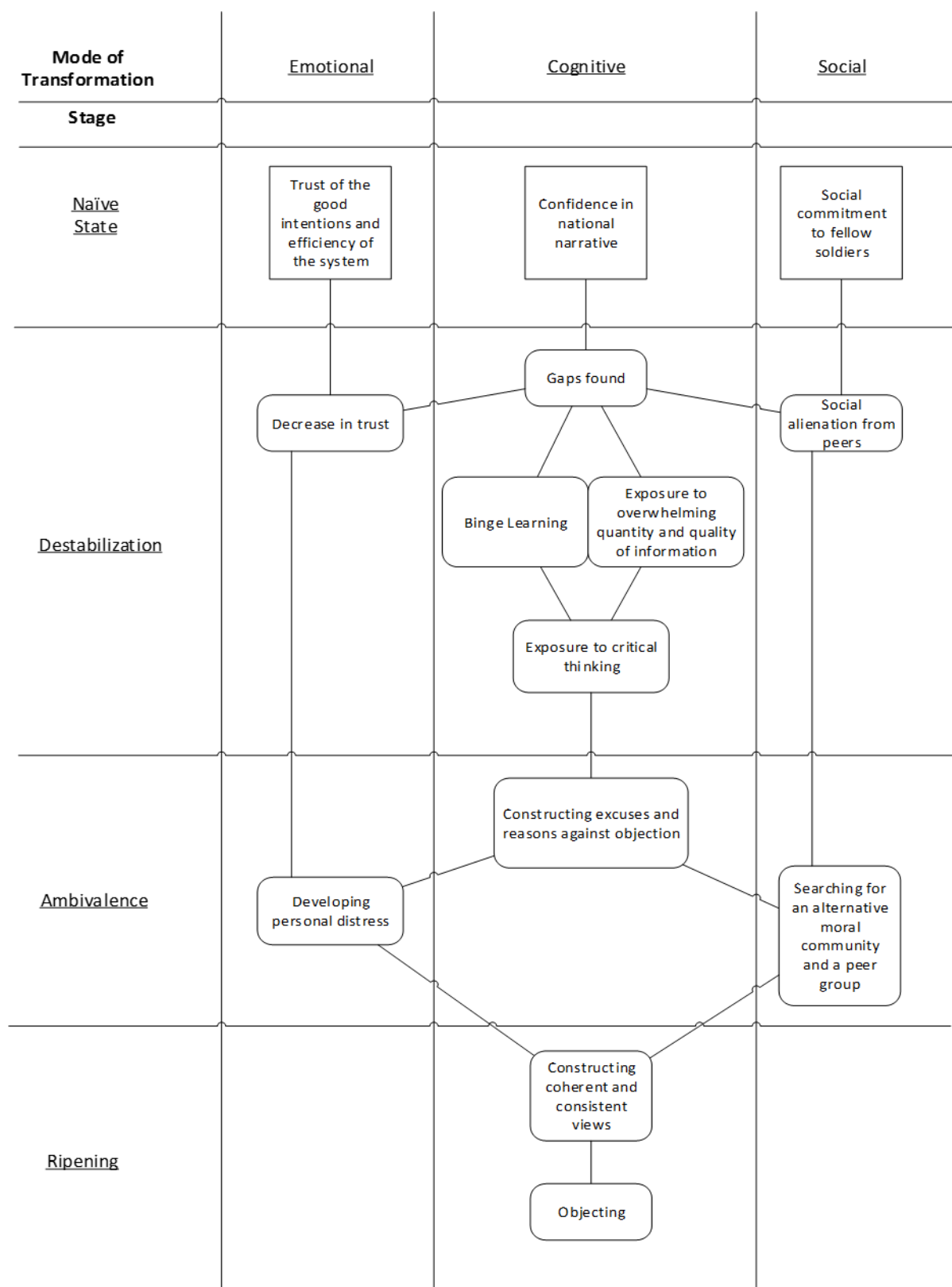
**The emotional mode.** The emotional mode consists of loss of trust in the system, its efficiency and good intentions. Later, as nothing changes around the individual and his questions remain unresolved, the individual's mental health may deteriorate to the point of strong personal distress, which ripens to the decision to take action to change the situation. Interestingly, empathy did not seem to play a significant role for almost all of the participants.



**The social mode.** Within the social mode, the process is triggered when the individual's peers do not share his questions and concerns, leading him to gradually grow apart from his unit and experience alienation from his friends. The individual then starts seeking alternative social groups which can relate to his concerns and provide social support. These alternative social groups can be other sympathetic moral communities and groups of peer soldiers who are undergoing a similar process simultaneously or have done so in the past. Once the individual identifies such alternative social groups and they accept him, objection becomes easier.

**The integrative model of transformation.** The description of each of those modes of transformation alone neither provides a sufficient explanation nor a convincing one and here the interaction between the modes comes into place, as described in figure 6.

Figure 6. An Integrative Model of Transformation.



***Naïve state.*** The baseline state, in which most citizens in Israel and soldiers in the IDF are situated, is a naïve one, in which the individual is confident of his worldview and national narrative, which he acquired through socialization in his family, peer group and the Israeli educational system. In this state, one feels there is strong compatibility between the national narrative and rhetoric of good intentions and security needs on the one hand and the way he perceives reality on the other hand. Three stages in the process of transformation have been identified. The interaction between the three modes progresses along them: destabilization, ambivalence, and finally, ripening.

***Destabilization.*** The first stage in this process is destabilization, which takes place when a gap opens between one's own national narrative and the actions that are actually found taking place on behalf of that narrative. This gap triggers a pursuit for answers in the form of acquiring new information and exposure to critical thinking, which may provide a better understanding of this gap.

Most typically, through his encounter with military service, this naïve state is destabilised by three possible components. The most important one is that the political reality of the Israeli occupation, as he comes to realize, is not as simple as he thought, and there is a discrepancy between the image of Israel as well-intentioned and aspiring towards peace, as he was socialized to believe, and the actions he is asked to perform in his military service in the name of Israel. This destabilisation can be accompanied by a reduction of trust in the IDF's conduct and the government's policy, and very often by gradual alienation from his fellow soldiers who do not find his questions concerning and occasionally resent him for raising them.

***Ambivalence.*** The second stage of ambivalence is triggered by the anxiety of the person arising from the individual's conclusion of the newly acquired information and understanding of the political reality, such that in order to be consistent with his own values,

he must refuse to take part in military action. Thus, as a reaction, during this stage, the individual engages in reasoning and an internal dialogue which is aimed at justifying his actions as a soldier, rather than rebelling against the system.

***Ripening.*** This third stage occurs when the individual has been able to develop a coherent world view capable of sufficiently explaining all his disturbing findings about reality.

The emotional and social modes of transformation interact with the cognitive one in its different stages. The emotional mode is evident when destabilization causes a decrease in the trust of the individual in the good intentions of both the IDF and the government. Later, during the cognitive ambivalence stage, the emotional mode manifests itself through personal distress as the individual does not manage to justify his actions as a soldier. Thus, it seems that the emotional mode plays the role of a catalyst and is most significant in triggering transitions from stage to stage, while the cognitive mode plays a central role within each stage.

The social mode of transformation comes into effect at the first stage of alienation from the peer group, as they do not share the same concerns the individual has, or even sanction him for expressing them. Following this, the individual begins to seek alternative social groups, either ones which can endorse his political doubts or one consisting of people in a similar situation, who can function as a support group. Finding such an alternative group and its willingness to accept the individual allows him to move from the ambivalence to the ripening stage. Thus, the social context provides an anchor around which the cognitive work is conducted at each stage.

The integrative model provides an explanation not only for the different stages in the process of transformation but, no less importantly, for the catalysts and motivations to move from one stage to the next. To a certain extent, it can be argued that while the work done at

each stage by the individual is mostly cognitive, the triggers to move from stage to stage are emotional and social. In this view, the social aspects play a promoting role in the process, as loss of trust and later, development of personal stress become one's motivators to progress from one stage to the next.

The social mode, on the other hand, plays a different role, in which social reference groups play the role of an 'anchor', which provides the individual with a safe space to explore cognitively his political and social context and possibly progress to the next stage.

Interestingly, and this is very common among the participants, the end-stage of the process is not foreseen as they pass through it, nor do all of them complete the entire journey by actively seeking a way out of serving in the OPT, either as confronter or grey objectors. It may be said that each individual stops moving down the path when the emotional triggers are no longer active, namely, when personal stress decreases and they feel there is a sufficient correspondence between their outlook and reality of the actions of the IDF as they see it. It is suggested that personal stress acts as a catalyst of the process of transformation and that in its absence, one would rather remain in her or his stage rather than move on, having to suffer potentially more serious consequences.

As the number of COs in the IDF, as well as in other militaries, is extremely low, it could be assumed that those who do not object simply do not go through the same process as the COs. However, this is not a sufficient explanation as it does not specify what makes some soldiers go through it and others not. Instead, the integrative model developed in this study suggests that most people may start going through this process. However, as moving from one stage to the next requires the co-occurrence of several conditions (such as experiences of loss of trust in the system in the emotional mode, combined with refusal of a peer-group to let one express his feelings on the social one), as the process moves forward, fewer and fewer individuals keep advancing toward its later stages. Since the only

individuals who are identified as having passed through it are the ones whose behaviour changes, namely the ones who reached the ripening stage, it could be mistakenly assumed that they are the only ones who even started going through it.

### **Theoretical considerations and Implications**

The findings in this study have implications for the theory of transformation processes. This section reviews several theories and concepts which the findings of this study support.

#### **Structure versus Agency**

The relation between structure and agency, and the preference given to structure if not otherwise challenged, play an important role in the participants' narratives. First, the family and the peer-group emerge as the most influential structures in shaping the individual's identity in childhood and adolescence. It is only later that the participant's agency is employed to critically review the influence of these structures and transform them. The extreme effort such employment requires may explain, in part, why most people follow inherited political views (Beck & Jennings, 1991).

Second, many of the participants, especially those who completed their mandatory service during the 1990's and at the time of the Oslo accords, remember that they used to pacify their own discomfort arising from their experiences in the OPT by saying that it would only be a matter of time until a peace agreement was reached. In other words, they were expecting structural change to take place from conflict to peace. It was only the collapse of the Oslo accord and the eruption of the second intifada that impelled those participants to take action, that is, employ their agency.

This notion that structures take precedence over agencies has been expressed in several different contexts (Fuchs, 2001; Heugens & Lander, 2009; McCubbins, Noll, & Weingast, 1989) and it could be argued that Galtung had given structure a much stronger

emphasis than agency in the context of peace and conflict studies (Galtung, 1969).

However, this body of literature largely perceives both structure and agency as static categories, thus not addressing circumstances in which their interrelations may change.

One such explanation as to why at a certain point the participants were willing to wait for a structural change to take place, and later gave lead to their agency can be explained by their political and social affiliations. Politically speaking, as most of the participants come from Zionist left-wing families, they felt that the government lead by Yitzhak Rabin represented them and their political outlook. Socially, most of them not only came from families with the same characteristics of Israeli hegemonic social groups (that is, Ashkenazi, secular, upper-middle-class and progressive), but they were also brought up with a sense of ownership of the Israeli narrative and state. Thus, the deep trust they placed in the Israeli political leadership of the time was strongly rooted in their political and social group. Following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the rise of the Likud party, which was supported by entirely different political and social groups, the hope that structural change would take place was lost, leaving a void that had to be filled with their own agency.

The findings of this study indicate that ownership may moderate the structure-versus-agency dilemma. It seems that when one experiences ownership of the political structure (for example, by membership in the dominant social and political group), they are more likely to abide by the political structure and not rebel against it. However, once the sense of ownership is lifted and one finds himself politically marginalized (in the case of this study, when the Likud party came to power), agency comes into action, which suggests that self-perception of belonging to a social minority makes one more likely to prefer agency over structure.

### **Group Identity and Cognitive Consistency**

*Social identity theory* proposes, assuming that individuals have some input, that group affiliation and identification are adopted in order to maximize self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Accordingly, it could have been expected that most participants would not change their social affiliation to alternative moral communities unless the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. The fact that most soldiers, even ones holding left-wing outlooks, do not object and join these alternative moral communities indicates that in most cases this assumption of social identity theory is valid. What then, can explain some participants' choices to identify with left-wing groups that have low social prestige?

This question can be explained when the concept of *cognitive consistency* comes into play. As Greenwald and Ronis (1978) point out, positive correlation between attitudes and behaviours is essential for preserving self-esteem. According to this explanation, participants' choices of alternative moral communities is aimed at achieving stronger compatibility between their outlook and their act of objection, and the choice of an alternative moral community endorses such consistency. Alternatively, in the case of the participants, cognitive consistency may function as a moderating variable in the causal influence of group affiliation on self-esteem. That is, one chooses a group of affiliation which will best serve the purpose of improving their self-esteem. However, this leads to consideration of the group's values and in a case of strong dissonance between the group's values and the individual's, she or he may choose a different group even at the cost of reduction in their social capital.

Thus, *social identity theory* and the principle of *cognitive consistency* become competitive mechanisms between which objectors have to choose. Evidently, the participants' choice in this study indicated that *cognitive consistency* was more important in improving their self-esteem, while for many others, social affiliation was more essential.



This difference between the participants and between other soldiers may provide support for two theoretical considerations. The first relates to Kohlberg's *moral development theory* (Kohlberg, 1971) suggesting that the participants have advanced closer to the sixth stage, when their own moral judgement of universal human rights becomes more important than considerations of social norms in Israel.

The second explanation for participants' preference of *cognitive consistency* over prestigious group-affiliation is that at least some of them have *innate non-conformity* (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Yamaguchi et al., 1995) tendencies, making group affiliation less central in their self-esteem.

However, *cognitive consistency* is relative in its scope and in its ability to shape the participants' views. Although several of the participants had gone a long way in search of a non-compromising political outlook, which led them far away from the Zionist paradigm, most of them had settled for a more pragmatic outlook. Their pragmatism manifests itself in their choice to remain Zionist, and for some to keep serving in the military while only avoiding, or objecting to, service in the OPT. For these, it may be argued that group affiliation was preferred over cognitive consistency, as their choice was pragmatic, that is, to maintain a hold on to their Zionist-Israeli group identity, despite its role in the Israeli occupation.

### **Contact Theory**

When analysed along the lines of the integrative model of transformation presented here, contact with Palestinians seems to have a potentially transformative effect at two main junctures. The first is its potential contribution to destabilize the *naïve state*, where most participants were placed when they took part in planned dialogue encounters in their youth. As mentioned in chapter six, dialogue encounters have a positive effect of prejudice and inter-group hostility reduction, but without follow-up action, this effect almost completely

disappears within a few months (Bar-Natan, Rosen, & Salomon, 2005; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005). The integrative model presented in this study suggests that not only should dialogue encounters be followed up in order to sustain their effect, but it also specifies what kind of follow-up activity is required. In its cognitive mode, the stage of *destabilization* includes learning processes focusing mainly on acquiring new and contradictory information (through binge learning and exposure to significant quantity and quality of such information) and exposure to critical thinking. Thus, follow-up on encounters does not necessarily imply follow-up with contact alone, although contact is advisable. In order to maintain the process of transformation, perhaps more formal learning processes should follow through school or youth movements curricula, for example.

The second transformative role which dialogue encounters potentially facilitate is the transition from the stage of *ambivalence* to the stage of *ripening*. Here, when learning has already been conducted, individuals are preoccupied with searching for new moral communities, as well as with deliberating on counter-arguments to the critical ones they were introduced to in the stage of *destabilization*. Here, the function of dialogue changes from destabilizing existing convictions to providing social assurance of the existence of alternative moral communities, potentially consisting of both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. In creating this sense of community, it is important, with this capacity of the dialogue encounter, to emphasize ongoing contact and the reintegration of the participants back into the wider society, which would endorse and support this process of transformation. It seems that even if planned dialogue does not have the capacity to transform core beliefs and convictions of the parties (Rosen & Salomon, 2011), by providing an awareness of alternative moral communities, it may nonetheless support processes of transformation among its participants.

## Masculinity

In chapter 7, when describing the alternative masculine features they have developed, participants mention, among other things, acknowledging and expressing their feminine side, as well as adopting feminist views. These alternative masculinity traits resonate with some reports on similar processes men are undergoing worldwide, although probably more prevalent in western countries, in acknowledging “gender as a problematic construct, rather than as a natural, taken-for-granted reality” (Messner, 1993, p. 723). Participants’ claims that they express their feminine sides more often create the expectation that their emotional mode of transformation will relate to or even consist of *ethic of care* (Gilligan, 1982) or, at the very least, that compassion would play a central role in their experience. However, most participants’ reasoning is strongly rational, with a few exceptions of compassion as a trigger for transformation.

Two possible interpretations come to mind for the relative lack of expression of empathy. The first is that in contrast to the participants’ own rhetoric, and considering the fact that quite a few of them received support from peer-groups of male-combatant objectors (e.g. Courage to Refuse), in fact traditional masculine socialization is still strongly embedded, even if rhetorically they reject it.

The second possible explanation for the scarcity of empathy expression is that the participants had experience of and might have even been motivated by strong empathy, but they were not mindful or eager to express it in their interviews, following Levant’s suggestion that male socialization suppresses emotional expressions (Levant, 1998), let alone when the interviewer is an ex-combatant male himself.

Each of these possible explanations suggests that alternative masculinity still requires further research on the potential effect of processes of transformation on gender identity formation and its consequences.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Conflict Intervention**

Beyond the theoretical implications of this study, the initial intention was to contribute to the practice of conflict intervention. Now that the participants' process of transformation has been tracked and conceptualized, some suggestions for intervention process design can be considered. This section outlines implications of this study for practice both at the macro-level of *theory of change* and for principles of conflict intervention.

#### **Implication for Theory of Change**

In a brief review of applying *theories of change* to conflict intervention, Shapiro (2005) refers to three typical modes of change among individuals, around which theories of change revolve, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioural. Additionally, on a larger scale, some theories of change mention intergroup relations as an equivalent of the social mode of transformation. These theories of change specify short-term, intermediate and long-term goals and outline intended effects on participants in interventions. However, most, if not all, theories of change tend to be one-dimensional with intervention techniques which target a single mode of intervention.

A comparison of the modes of change reviewed by Shapiro (2005) and the ones emerging from this study produce several insights. First, behavioural change, which may be achieved through intervention, for example, following Bandura's *social learning theory* (Bandura, 1969, 1977), providing modelling for participants of the change the intervenor seeks to create. Since in the present study, in most cases, processes of transformation were initiated by the participants rather than by an external intervention, a behavioural mode of transformation did not emerge from the participants' stories. However, the findings can contribute to behavioural theories of change by emphasizing the potential transformative role of public figures, teachers and writers in exposure to critical thinking, as was presented

in chapter eight. At the same time, the strong emphasis of the participants' narratives on the cognitive components of the transformative process may question the stability that behavioural effects may have over long periods of time.

Second, Shapiro's review (Shapiro, 2005) does not include theories of change in moral values. This corresponds well with the *moral conundrum* in this study, suggesting that intervention programs do not generally attempt to transform participants' values. However, in practice, many peace education programmes do aim to change, among other things, participants' values (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Fountain, 1999; Halstead & Pike, 2006). By no means does the present study argue that such a transformation mode is incomprehensible or impossible to achieve. However, it seems that as there is both a lack of evidence in the study and a scarcity of moral theories of change, moral transformation as an explicit goal of conflict intervention and peace education should be carefully revisited, articulated and its practice should be evaluated.

### **Suggested Conflict Intervention Guidelines**

This study does not aspire to form a new theory of change. However, it implies general guidelines for one, which targets initiating processes of transformation among individuals.

As a starting point, it is argued that one-dimensional theories of change should make room for multi-dimensional ones, in which cognitive, social and emotional techniques of intervention are viewed systemically. Thus, the theory of change proposed here may be seen as a sequence of intervention techniques, guided by the principles of the integrative model of transformation. Each stage in the process has different challenges and dilemmas, which suggests the order and timing in which each type of technique should be employed. At first, destabilization of the naïve state could employ techniques which may expose discrepancies

between perceived realities and the perceived national narrative and reality on the ground, involving human rights violations, failures of the military system and its insincerity.

This should be followed by facilitating self-initiated learning and exposure to alternative sources of information to those provided by mainstream media and the educational system, thus preparing the ground for the introduction of critical thinking frameworks, which provide more comprehensive understanding of the newly-learned information, thus destabilizing former convictions.

Next, emphasis should be placed on the social context in establishing networks and introducing moral communities which can provide social support for the processes participants are undergoing. The second function of this emphasis is to provide emotional relief from potential stress that participants might experience when they realise the personal and social consequences of the process they are undergoing. This would prepare the ground for ripening of the participants and commitment to change.

These guidelines for intervention are neither a prescription for success nor do they guarantee that all or even most participants would complete an entire process of transformation. However, it is based on insights on what is achievable, and so, makes a sound starting point for planning an informed intervention.

### **Recommended Principles for Practice**

In addition to an overarching structure for interventions suggested above, specific recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study.

**Target group.** Following the discussion of the moral conundrum, there is little evidence for the possibility of moral transformation. Preferred target groups should be those that regard human rights as a primary value in their moral predisposition. This proposal relates to an ongoing discourse of a practitioner deliberating whether intervention should be aimed at *convincing the convinced*, namely left-wing supporters or if it should aim at

extremists, such as the settlers, assuming that this is the real challenge and therefore, where effort should be made. Although the latter position is often the more popular one, the findings of this study cannot support it with concrete evidence.

**Timing of intervention.** If long-term intervention such as the one suggested in the previous section is not possible, which is usually the case, the research findings suggest that the best target group for intervention is the age-group of the early twenties. It seems that generally speaking, this life-period provides a window of opportunity in which individuals are more likely to show interest in, knowledge of and ability for critical thinking, but are not too rigid yet in their convictions and political outlook.

**Social framework.** One of the highly-consistent findings of this study across almost all participants is the importance of the social context and specifically the accompanying peer-group. Social networking is extremely important for the success of an intervention programme. This networking has to be established and actively maintained, with specific attention given to how it can support the participants in their daily lives outside the programme. One of the best options for this is creating integrative frameworks of an educational, professional and living communities, which would not only support their members but actually provide them with a group identity and perhaps even a physical environment, such as the one established in the Jewish-Palestinian village Oasis of Peace in Israel.

**Access to Alternative Information and Critical Thinking.** A valuable insight into acquiring new information suggests that this information has to be achieved by each individual's initiative. However, supportive sources of information should be established and maintained, easily accessible and user-friendly.

## **Conclusion**

### **Contribution of this Study**

This study attempts, through incorporating various traditions of literature, to conceptualize processes of personal transformation of soldiers into objectors in situations of protracted and violent conflict. These processes are characterized by a reduction of in-group compliance and out-group hostility, and typically increase the individual's critical consideration of their national narrative and justifications of violence enacted on its behalf.

In its findings and discussion, the study contributes to several fields of research and practice. First, it contributes to the psychology of prosocial behaviour, by providing insights into factors which increase one's likelihood to act towards what she or he perceives as a benefit for others, especially victims, even while paying a price for doing so.

Second, it contributes to an emerging literature in social psychology, which views personal and group functioning as dynamic rather than static. This contribution is made through the use of both classic and contemporary psychological models and concepts, and relating them in a process-oriented model which provides possible explanations for why and under what circumstances people change their attitudes, perceptions, outlooks and behaviours.

Third, the study contributes to interdisciplinary research, which integrates terminologies and theories mainly from social sciences and from different branches of research in social psychology. Interdisciplinary research is a common practice in new and emerging fields, such as peace and conflict studies, gender and culture studies and much less so in more traditional disciplines such as psychology and sociology. Thus, connecting cognitive, emotional and social processes may provide new perspectives to scholarly arguments which most often remain within the boundaries of a single discipline.



Fourth, this study provides research in peace and conflict studies with a better understanding of the conditions and triggers for catalysts and consequences of constructive changes and transformation on the individual level. This conceptualization can feed into a wider research field on how individual-level transformation interacts with large-scale transformation processes.

Last, this study contributes to the practice of conflict intervention in two ways. Firstly, it provides insights regarding theories of change, in that it elaborates and clarifies the individual-level changes which can be achieved and therefore should be the focus of intervention techniques. Secondly, it contributes specific insights into the work of the practitioners in the field of conflict intervention.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Building on the findings of this study, future research may take three different, yet complementary, directions. First, the research findings open new questions to explore. Taking for example the *morality* conundrum, follow up research will explore the possibility of moral transformation and its requirements.

Second, as this study focused on the Israeli case, it is not possible, at this stage, to apply its conclusions to other contexts. A comparative study would be required to establish a wider understanding of the process of transformation across other cultural, political and social settings.

Finally, this research focuses intentionally on the individual level. However, its outcomes provide an alternative perspective on research on group transformation processes, which may vary from those currently employed by research. Further research can observe conflict transformation as a consequence of dynamic social and individual actors, rather than merely an arena in which structures and agencies compete and interact.

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# Appendix A: Transcript of Interview with the Researcher

Interview Date: 21 May 2014

Location: Dunedin

RR: Rachel Rafferty (interviewer)

D: Daniel Fridberg (interviewee)

RR: So, this is the first interview with participant B on 21 May 2014. As I was just saying, in this first session it would be really interesting just to hear a bit about your life story – how you see it. You might want to think in terms of certain chapters, how it has evolved. As you know, this study and what it is about already anyway, I am particularly interested to know how you came to be involved in peace-building, but going back as far as you want to very early influences – but yeah if you'd like to just tell me a bit about your life story...

D: Ok.... So, I come from an immigrant family. I was three when my family immigrated to Israel, from the Soviet Union. I guess, being an immigrant family, well my father's side of the family was very Zionist, very Jewish in its identity formation. My mother's side was completely Russian – they were Communists, they didn't observe any kind of traditional religious traditions. So, it was kind of a mixture, but my father's was more dominant in the sense that our immigration to Israel was for kind of ideological, I guess, reasons.

So, we immigrated to Israel in 1979. Israel back then was considered to be something between naïve and pure - in its narrative, I guess. So, Jewish people were not living there feeling they are involved in part of a conflict – there were conflicts with neighbouring countries but Palestinians were not considered to be a conflict-related issue. There were free passages, relatively. And Jewish people in Israel were not living with the notion basically that they are involved in conflict or that anything is wrong.

Growing up, my father was ... he's a photographer and we lived in the periphery of Israel on the northern side because that's where my mother found a job... and he kind of had to invent himself. In the 1980s photography was not really something in vogue in Israel, and so he ended up becoming the unofficial photographer of the Arab villages in our area – it is a mostly an Arab-inhabited part of Israel. So he did everything from school photos, weddings, reproduction of old family photos. And he became an actual kind of – I am not sure if there is an English term for that – but he was accepted as their own in their homes, basically. As a child, I was accompanying him many times....

RR: What would be the local, the Hebrew term?

D: *Ben-Bayit*, I guess. Someone from our home, from within.

RR: Nice.



D: So, I grew up very exposed to Arab culture. Most Jews were only exposed to the Arab culture by services givers, like waiters, by blue-collar workers constructing buildings – things like that. Interestingly, at the same time, my father was and is still a very right-wing person. He's a Likud party member – Likud is the right-wing government party. He even voted a couple of times for even more right-wing candidates. My mother was never so involved in politics but she is more or less in the same line with him. I also have an older brother, he is ten years older than I am. So when I was eight years old he was eighteen, and he was very politically involved as a right-wing political activist. Our family, although I personally and also my family were very exposed to the Arab neighbours surrounding the area we lived in, it was a right-wing family.

And although again we were surrounded by Arab villages, the city itself I grew up in was almost purely Jewish. Living there was almost completely divided by ethnicity. Today the inhabitants are almost 40% Arabs, its situated in a really interesting transformation – although the Jewish inhabitants don't really like it, they're quite scared of it, but we'll see how it goes there (my parents still live there).

So, this was kind of the background. I grew up in a Jewish school. I had a very good Arab friend who studied with me in high school and we became very good friends. Umm...Loyal is not a very good term, but they were not people who would raise flags for example, or march on demonstrations of the Arab side or things like that. They were not people of this sort. His father was a pretty big construction contractor, they were pretty well off. Even, by the age of eighteen all of us were supposed to be recruited to the army and this friend of mine also wanted to volunteer. So they were not Zionistic but they were kind of accepting the terms of the place they lived.

We had one very interesting conversation. I think it was the first time I heard from an Arab person directly the costs that they paid for being Arabs in Israel. He told me about the lands that the state confiscated from his family, when Israel was established. So, on the other hand it never reflected in anything he did or said. Otherwise, during my military service we still held very good contact and many times I was coming to his house either on the way back with the uniform and everything and I certainly wasn't aware that it may cause any problem – I didn't feel on their side that it did. And also he and his brother were educated in our school, they had a younger sister who was sent to Nazareth – the closest Arab city – to an Arab school. They didn't want to send her to a Jewish school but with the boys they didn't have a problem. I guess also that they were Christians also influenced it, because Christians are a little bit better assimilated in Israel, if you can call it this way.

So, I did the full military service, combat service, very kind of ideological...

RR: In what sense?

D: I guess in the same line with my family, I also held pretty right-wing ideas.... Although I had my doubts, or questions at times. During the first intifada, it was 1987, up until then we had many Arab friends of my father visiting us and then it just stopped when the Intifada started. Although the Intifada was basically located in the

West Bank, not necessarily inside Israel, still most of the Arab citizens supported it and I guess they felt kind of strange or inappropriate to keep connections with my father. Maybe also for him it was kind of disappointing to see people he had had such good relations with just turning their back. I guess, neither them nor he really handled it very well. But no one really expected it or knew what to do about it. At least as far as the Jewish Israelis were concerned, this was completely out of the blue. They didn't understand what was the fuss, what were the problems.

So...um... then after my undergrad studies which was not very relevant, I started psychology and got my masters in conflict resolution. And then I became much more both active and I guess started to look more actively for answers to questions that I had. At the same time, I had to go a few times on reserve duty on the military to the territories, to the West Bank, which I didn't have to do on my regular service because I was an instructor.

So actually, the first time I had to confront a civilian population was in my reserve military service, when I was actually a citizen and not a soldier any more, for one part of the year. And it kind of changes your perspective, or at least puts many of the things you have to do in a different light.

And at the same I had the opportunity to study much more deeply about the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and different aspects of it, I guess. I participated in a series of workshops and projects which I had an opportunity for the first time to encounter on more-or-less equal terms with Palestinians and also with Arabs from other countries such as Egypt or Lebanon and Syria.

I think one of the first kind of...turning points...I'm not sure if turning point is the right terms but ... for sure a meaningful experience, was when I spent a month at a summer school in Greece, in which they gathered people from all around the Mediterranean area, from the conflict areas. So, there were Greeks and Turks, there were people from the former Yugoslavia republics, and the whole of the Middle East – Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, and Egyptians. And it was a pretty overwhelming time, really. We just stayed together at the same place, you studied kind of academic studies in the morning and then you just hung out, spent time together. And, I found out that I couldn't relate there to almost any of the Israelis – in some way I was boycotted by them. And I found out the people I could communicate the best with were the Lebanese. I still have very good friends that I keep in touch with.

So, that was kind of one of the first places where I allowed myself to speak out loud about what I think of Israel – not only policy. It is very easy to speak out about Israeli policy, the government, it's easy to object – but something more profound about Israeli identity, about the Jewish narrative in Israel and how it excludes anyone who's not Jewish. And also, how it excludes anyone who is not European Jew inside the Jewish community. So, that was, I guess, the first time I could do it. And I guess once you do it once and you find yourself more kind of coherent... or comfortable with your thoughts and opinions, and you can explore further. So, I participated in other workshops.

And during that time, I also decided to start practising it myself. So, I did a facilitation course for this kind of encounters. I worked in this field for over ten years, in general. So, I was very involved in Israeli-Palestinian dialogue – grassroots kind of processes. Meanwhile, I practiced a lot of other things in conflict resolution, but that's more-or-less, if I can describe the process, this is one of many influences.

Also, a bit earlier I started dating with my wife – it was 2001. And she was, back then, very politically active, a very extreme left-wing political activist. Today she holds the same views but she's not as active as she used to be. And also through her I was exposed to very radical, I guess, discourse and... thoughts, explanations, events – a completely different milieu to Israeli society – which is also something that once you are know it is there, you cannot disregard it. Although I was aware of this kind of views before, it is very easy to refer to them as something self-hating, all kinds of psychological explanations – self-hatred ... there are not many in English but in Hebrew you have many terms that are synonyms for self-hatred. But once you actually engage in these discourses it's much harder to just stay with the psychological explanations, as an excuse to not engage in it.

And so I found myself asking many questions. And, as I continued to go through this whole process, I guess, my military reserve duties were becoming harder and harder for me to hold, or participate in. And at one point, that's something which was very personal for me in determining for me... because it's a very important phase to ask questions but at a certain point you should also say 'ok I have had enough time asking questions I should start giving answers', which is a bit harder because then you have to commit to something.

So, I participated in this workshop in Germany, and there was this was this very... they were all more or less our age, they were students, very communicative. We had...well, you know, some more, some less – but overall, we established good relations with them and we had some good talks. There was particularly one guy who fluent in Hebrew, he studied in a Jewish-Israeli college, he lives between Jerusalem and Ramallah, but on the other side of the checkpoint. And, so I had some good discussions with him. One of the workshops was a more intimate one – we were just six people together – and we were asked to speak, to tell our life stories or just specify some events that were relevant.

And he told us about his father. His father, they were a family of I think 5 children, this guy was the oldest, and his father owned this store, that was how he supported the family. I'm not sure if it was a tumour or something but he (*the father*) had to have an operation on his stomach and he was at home, he had to rest for a few months to recover before he could go back to work, and since he was the only one who dealt with the finances of the family no one paid the bills (while he was sick) and he didn't say anything probably. And then one day there's a knock on the door and there's the, I guess one of the officials from the city council, coming accompanied by soldiers to confiscate things to pay for the taxes they were not paying. Usually in the western parts of Jerusalem, in the Jewish parts this kind of operation would be accompanied by police but he was accompanied by soldiers. And then they came into the house and wanted to confiscate the TV or something and his father came from his room, where he

was lying in the bed, and tried to stop them. And one of the soldiers punched him in the stomach. And they took the TV and whatever they wanted and they went, and his father was feeling bad and apparently, his stitches opened with this punch and he started bleeding within, and after a few days he died, passed away.

And then they also had a whole story about getting his body across the checkpoint to the cemetery but that's a whole other story. When he told this story, I realised it could pretty easily be me – that soldier. Who to this day doesn't know he killed a person.

RR: Hmm, yes, it wasn't intentional.

D: He didn't do it ...conscientiously? Consciously? (*Questioning use of word*)

RR: Consciously. Well, it depends what's coming next – what you mean (*laughs lightly*)

D: Consciously. If I don't want to be involved in such actions or if I don't want to bring these kinds of consequences, I cannot allow myself to be in these situations.

RR: Hmm, yes, it's against your conscience.

D: Umm... because many times in those checkpoints I had to ... on the reserve military services I was a sort of commander, so I had a team... and any time there was a stressful situation, my only concern was for my team and myself. And I know that, I knew that it didn't take much for me to become, I guess violent or to take measures that could be .... Eventually kill someone, or for sure hurt someone. And you're in this state of mind, that you cannot really make any good judgments, but you just need to survive and you are full of fear mostly.

And that was, basically, when I decided I needed to end this reserve duty of mine. So I ... I did all kinds of things. Eventually I was able to do it due to a medical kind of condition which I half-had and half-invented.

RR: So it's difficult to leave then? You can't just say 'I'm not coming in any more' like in a normal job?

D: No, it's not. Some people do it because they also want to make a point. But I also ... At one stage, there was the second Lebanon war in 2006. We were called to reserve duty, to support the regular soldiers in the West Bank because they had to go to Lebanon. So, to change them in their posts in the West Bank. And that was the first time that I decided that I'm not going to do it. So, I went and I sought out a commander in my platoon. I had pretty much open channels with my commanding officers so I could talk with them – they were civilians as well. All of us were civilians who were taken to this situation. Obviously, they were more committed than I was, but they could understand and relate to it and we had a history together. So, we could talk about it. There wasn't much that they could do, so eventually I had to do it on my own. But at some point I was, I mean, I was preparing a bag to go to jail. When I ... eventually I found sort of a solution and avoided but I realised that if worst gets to worst I will

have to do it, to face whatever they were going to give me. So eventually I found a way so I didn't have to go to jail, but I was willing to.

So, that was more or less the end of my military career.

RR: Was this, had you already got started in mediation work at this time?

D: Yeah.

RR: Just to get an idea of the chronology here...

D: It was about 2006, I think the Lebanon war was actually the trigger for following through with my decision. I participated in that workshop in 2004. So, it took me another couple of years to actually.... I tried to stall time in all kinds of ways and eventually.... I did it in 2006, I guess.

RR: Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt, but was there something particular about that war or was it just the stage in your personal journey, you felt you had got to?

D: Well, I think there was something particular about that war. First of all...being more involved and knowledgeable at this time, the Lebanon war came also as quite a shock. There was nothing at this time and then one day all of a sudden there was an attack of Hezbollah on a soldier on a military patrol on the border. They kidnapped who they kidnapped then – or maybe they didn't kidnap then and they tried just missile launching over the borderline.

RR: Would that have been fairly typical at the time? Or was that something new?

D: No, not at all. It was a very peaceful – it is still a very peaceful border. Yeah, people go hiking there on vacations, it's a very beautiful area of Israel. So it was completely unexpected, no one saw it coming. I was very frustrated because there was a peaceful period more or less between the whole thing in 2001 when they kidnapped those three soldiers who were killed during this kidnap – but then there was nothing, there was a period of five years where nothing has been done, you know, in terms of diplomatic activity, trying to find a way to negotiate anything. Nothing happened. And basically that's the whole heritage of Yitzhak Shamir who was one of the .... He was the second prime minister in the 1980s. His whole philosophy of being a prime minister was not to do anything.

RR: (laughs lightly) Ok...

D: No, but it was the conservative philosophy of ruling. It just doesn't work this way. And people are paying the price for him taking the view that if he doesn't do anything, the status quo for sure is better than any change that can come. And these three, for example they were also reserve duty soldiers, they paid with their lives for this.

And then the Israeli response came and they completely demolished the Shi'ite quarter in Beirut. And I have a good friend, she's a Shi'ite and I think she lives in that quarter

but they fled to the mountains, they have a house in the mountains. And we were chatting and she was telling me what was going on across the whole city.

RR: Chatting on the phone?

D: No, chatting on the internet. At that point it became quite.... I was very angry about it, both politically and personally. Because I started to realise it's not only a political game – people are actually paying with their lives on both sides.

And so, it was the first time – I'm not a big marcher, I don't like crowds of any kind so this type of left-wing demonstrations - I don't feel very comfortable there – but I did march. It was one of the few times that I did.

That's the question, I always want another reason why I started to act upon my decision I guess, on this one.

RR: I have lots questions but I don't know if you want to ... does that feel like its brought us up to the point where...

D: You asked what brought me to political activism, and I'm not actually a political activist. I really liked your term of 'bridge-builder' because I don't build bridges in terms of, I don't think I do such a significant work, actually, but I must say that I was able in the years of my activity to establish good relations with people, which survived all kinds of crisis periods – from the Lebanon war to the assaults on Gaza, suicide bombings, things like that.

RR: What would be your thoughts then on what makes a good relationship like that? Or what helps it to be resilient? Drawing from your own experience...

D: For me, I think, I would say that the most important thing for me in a Palestinian partner, and a thing that my Palestinian partners appreciated in me, is that I can trust that they are doing the same work on self-reflection that I do on my part.

There is this whole genre – and my wife is taking more of a part in it – of Palestinians, Palestinian practitioners who keep kind of, we discussed, one of this confrontational kind of models so that they keep pointing fingers and saying 'what is your responsibility?'. And it's not that they're not right, in essence, as an idea. But if I am looking for partners, who are people and not ideas, then I need people who are committed to this introspection – because it doesn't stop there. I see them as partners who will march with me a long way.

To just give you an example, I have a very, very good friend... Palestinian friend, he's a man – which is funny because usually this field is predominated by women.

RR: That's right, you said.

D: But we are actually, you know, the way you gain some partners that with them you can work better. So, he's one of them. And there was me stopping being involved in the

military – it was gradual. I mean there was me stopping being actively involved in combat positions but I kept going a couple of more years later, just for training, things that have nothing to do with either the West Bank or... civilian public contact of any kind. So I thought it would be, you know, bearable, at least.

And then there was this week we had to facilitate – we were both progressing on this kind of ladder, there was something like that, a kind of professional ladder of dialogue in Israel and we started soon enough training staffs of facilitators and also accompany them in long-term processes. So we had a half a week workshop with one of the biggest organisations in Israel who conduct these kinds of encounters, it's called *Givat Haviva*, and I was coming every day from the military training they had to have in this specific week.

So, we discussed it before, kind of trying to contain it in a way – and I never showed up in uniform, obviously, to the actual meetings. But he knew, what was going on. And we were very good friends, we had a pretty long history of working together, and so on. On the first day of work with that group we had such a terrible experience – both together and with the group - that we didn't communicate at all. I mean he... usually we sit on both sides of the group so we can communicate with our eyes at least. With this kind of ongoing relations... you usually understand each other pretty easily. But then he asked me something with his eyes, and I thought it was something else. So he said something and they responded and he asked with his eyes what do I think and I thought he was asking me about them, so I said I don't like it very much and he thought I was referring to what he said to them. So, we kind of had some sort of miscommunication.

So, we took the whole night – we didn't go to sleep that night – and we just sat up talking through the whole night to understand what was going on. Because also the group was suffering from it. We kind of came up with this theory of 'parallel process' where our own relationship is reflected by the group - and it works.

RR: I wouldn't be surprised, yeah!

D: That's one of the themes in my thesis also. So, we just spent the whole night talking about it. And the next day, it became much better. But it was not – and also for him to accept that I am coming from the military to.... I was sort of living a dual life. I wouldn't say anything about it to the participants there. I wouldn't lie about it but I wouldn't have wanted to speak about it.

So, I had a lot of problems both ethical and professional. But the point is that we were able to speak about it. And I think this sort of both intimacy and sincerity is something I am looking for with my partners, because not only are they partners professionally but also in a way for life. They are also not accepted for the work they do, sometimes even worse. So, in a way it's a choice that both of us make, and it has consequences.

RR: I have actually noticed that, as a bit of a theme, and I imagine it would be the same with other people doing this work, that at some point you're going to go against the politics of your family, you're going to go against the sort of narratives and identity of

your wider group and so you're going to be kind of isolated. And I wonder, what helps you to get through that or what motivates you, to make it worth it?

D: I must say, I never got isolated.

RR: Oh, okay.

D: I didn't say much about my brother, my parents are kind of moderate right-wing, conservative people – my brother was for sure an extreme kind of right-wing activist. Then he became a little bit cynical. So, he wasn't as active but still he lives in a settlement, he's lived in different settlements in Palestine over the years.

As a teenager, I was visiting him in settlements, and one of the first – actually it was even kind of worse than a settlement if you have this kind of spectrum (*laughs lightly*) – it was in the old city of Jerusalem. So it's not a settlement, there are scattered Jewish families living there and they're being accompanied everywhere by military guards. All of them carry guns. Then again, a lot of other settlers do, but as a settler when you come home to your settlement you're kind of in your backyard so you're can be more relaxed, I guess. When you're amid thousands of Palestinians, and probably many of them are pretty angry at you, you're all the time tensed. I mean, I felt .... The only part of Jerusalem I knew back then was *that*. So, each time I was going on the bus to go back north, suddenly I was feeling all my tension easing. And sometimes it was tension I'd kept for a week.

But then again, I also visited a lot of very kind of extreme religious core groups, religious schools that kind of nourished these very extreme, very violent approaches towards Arabs, towards Palestinians, towards the Israeli left-wing. So, I knew it very well. And, I never lost a friend over political views. Sometimes, you know, we grew apart, or we don't see eye to eye and at some point, I might lose interest but I was never boycotted in that kind of way, although... I don't have any close friends who for my reasons stopped their military service or things like that.

But I guess one of the differences in my opinion between the bridge-builders and the political activists is that I have my own views, I have today my own answers also not only questions, but I am people-centred rather than idea-centred. I need to be able, both for my work but also that's the way I perceive my social position – I need to be able to work, I need to be able to have access to the most extreme militant right-wing activists, because if not, I'm just another person. It's ok to just be a person but if I am choosing to do what I do, then I cannot be, I cannot isolate myself from the people I don't want to be exposed to. Which, at times, might be very hard. With some, it is actually like living in Germany in the 30s and accept the Nazi party members for being legitimate people and holding opinions that even if you don't like it you have to accept them, you know, be able to speak with them – it's not easy.

And the situation in Israel is becoming harder, worse and worse in terms of freedom of speech, of opinion, even sometimes freedom of occupation. It's hard.... And at some point, not on the professional level but on the personal level, we did feel that we needed some air. Jerusalem in that sense is much worse even than Belfast, much worse



than the rest of Israel. You can live in a rural place or in Tel Aviv and be surrounded only by people like you, more or less, and not be exposed to graffiti saying, you know...some of the famous ones are ... if there won't be Arabs there won't be bomb attacks, and then if there won't be left-wingers there won't be bomb attacks. Things like that. So when, in the early 2000s we used to see these graffiti, we used to go to the city council to ask them to come and erase them, but at some point you give up. You cannot fight all the time all the people.

It's kind of.... Personally, I never suffered these kind of sanctions or isolation, but I also choose very carefully who I reveal my views to. Because the good thing in my profession is I am not supposed to discuss it with people I work with. Many times they do, if I work with kids - they are more interested and say 'ok, who did you vote for are you a left-winger?' And usually I tell them 'well, if that's what I chose to do you can imagine I support dialogue, or I support contact with Palestinians, I think it's important. But right now, it's not very relevant during our session, but let's talk later and I'll tell you exactly what you want to know'. But no one comes.

RR: (*laughs lightly*). That's interesting, very interesting indeed. I just have a few questions about, just from what you've said today, just to kind of tie that up.... You mentioned, going way back, your really good Arab friend in high school, and a particular conversation where you really heard about and started to understand the costs of being Arab and maybe some of the unfairness... Can you put words on how that felt for you as a Jewish citizen of Israel? If you can remember - I know it's not always easy to sort of put words on a reaction....

D: Yes... It wasn't the first time I found out about it, but it was the first time I heard it from a person, let alone a very good friend of mine.

RR: Ok.

D: Living in a house of four storeys for five people, and you know, living a very good life - I didn't feel really sorry for him in the personal sense. I was more aware of the picture that started to present it to me. It was complicated, because he lived in a mixed Christian-Muslim neighbourhood. There were very strong tensions between them, much stronger than between both of them and the Jews actually. So... it's a divided society in essence, not only in practice. So, what my feeling is... I mentioned earlier that I came from an immigrant family - and on the one hand it made it easier because I didn't have a grandfather who actually did it. Or actually, you know, participated in ethnic cleansing or bloody battles or whatever....

RR: In 1946, was it?

D: 1948 was the actual war, but the problems started before that. So I didn't have anything really personal about it. It was a collective identity thing, that's true, but not a family or heritage kind of thing. On the other hand, my Jewish peers who were born there, they did not choose to be there. And so this kind of discourse, which says 'ok, I'm here - I understand there were atrocities, there was violence, but I'm here'. If we can then say this to a Palestinian peer, for example, and if this can be a point for

reconciliation; 'I'm here. If you don't recognise me being here then it's hard for us to do it because I really don't have anywhere else to go – I was born here, it's the only place I know'.

And I wasn't born there. I was only three when we immigrated, but still I sort of had a place to go to. Not actually, because I don't have citizenship there or any rights, but theoretically. And I could obtain it. I never really looked into it, but theoretically I could obtain Lithuanian citizenship, I think. So, in that sense, for people who did deliberately chose to immigrate into Israel, and learning about the consequences to its indigenous people, it's a bit harder to justify it.

In Hebrew, there's a special term called '*Aliya*'. It's immigration, but only immigration into Israel. Literally, it means 'going up'. So, Israel is basically the top of the world and when you immigrate to Israel you go up. When you emigrate from Israel you go down. These are actually the words that are used. And if you are speaking Hebrew and instead of using this word 'climbing' or 'getting up', you use the word 'immigrate' people think it doesn't sound right. The word exists – if you want to move from New Zealand you emigrate. If you are Jewish and you want to move from New Zealand to Israel, you make '*Aliya*', you climb...moving up. 'Moving up' I think is the best translation.

So how do I refer to my family's immigration to Israel – it's as this 'moving up' kind of thing, which is also a spiritual thing. It's not only physical. We don't only move there to be able to live better or to be close to our family, but to become on a higher level, spiritually. That we, as Jews, now live where we are meant to live, where we are supposed to live. And if you start using 'immigration' instead.... occasionally, you live there, and you do hear it for all kinds of sociological reasons, but still, it's not value-charged.

But coming back to your question, listening to it, and I became aware of it much later, obviously, not at that time – at that time I was starting to realise that it's not very.... That there were reasons for the situation that I was observing. Because you see the present day and it's hard for you to explain, and so you try to look for explanations but if start to actually going back understand what was there, you get different, sometimes better, sometimes at least more knowledgeable, explanations for that.

RR: Hmm... what else stands out? (*musings to self*). I suppose, almost even just on a personal level, because I have been a civilian dealing with the military but I have never been in the military, none of my family have a tradition of contact with, or of playing a role state forces – well, maybe many years ago, in the first world war. So, if you don't mind, would you say a bit more just about the *experience* of that – you've said a bit about dealing with Palestinians when you are wearing a defence force uniform, what that was like when you first started to have those encounters...

D: Hmm... well, in a way I must say that I gained a very strange perspective once I got here and saw the college kids here. Because I was their age. And we were... military, basically, it's a game. It's a game that kids play when they're 18 years old. They're just kids, they've hardly learned any lessons.

Someone told me once that being a brigade commander, for example, in the military is like being a plant director, only your employees are children. And you have to discipline them, you kind of... they are children who don't recognise it any more. So, the experience of the military service itself was.... I'm looking for the right word.... I guess, for sure, it was very, very influential in terms of character-building – for the best and for the worst. You get very big responsibility. I personally was a tank commander. So I got a very, very big machine with a lot of arms power, a lot of ability, soldiers at my hand that I was commanding. It gives you a very strong sense of power - and responsibility.

One of the very few times I actually was engaged, not exactly in a battle but a sort of confrontation was when I was on a commanders' course, training. Then, Netanyahu was in his first term. I have a long history with him (*slight ironic tone - humour?*). And he opened the tunnel going under the core of the mount of the Temple and the mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. Basically, today they are open, they are a touristic site, it's not a big deal. It's been pretty interesting. But back then it was a big deal, it was sort of a political act. And a lot of riots started.

Actually, I served my military service at one of the best times, actually. Because it was the Oslo Accord in 1993, and I was recruited in 1994, so it was more or less a peaceful time. The West Bank was, there were suicide bombings but that was inside Israel so the police dealt with it, not the military. So, for us it was a pretty peaceful time. There was a feeling that we were marching towards a more peaceful era, there was a strong cooperation with the Palestinian security – well they established the Palestinian security forces back then.

So, in a sense it wasn't very eventful, so to speak. But in this period when Netanyahu opened these tunnels there were riots in Gaza, and we were sent as the first force called to the field. And we had no experience in this time of confrontation, because a lot of units designated to this kind of confrontations get special training in special kind of – they're called non-lethal weapons, tear gas and things like that. We didn't have any of them, we just had bullets and that was it. So, we knew that if we had to use it, it might have pretty bad consequences. We didn't shoot, even in the air. But we saw masses marching towards us.

Again, looking backwards it was another game. The Palestinian security forces were actually organising it. Hundreds of people, at least, came out to demonstrate. And they just drove them from checkpoint to checkpoint. So, they marched to the checkpoint and then the Palestinian officers stopped them, and then all of a sudden, they all got up and went to a different demonstration. It was part of a game, but when you are in the situation you don't really understand it. You don't have this perspective, you are only a very small.... How do call this very small tool in chess?

RR: A pawn.

D: Yes, you are a pawn.

RR: The disposable ones.

D: Exactly. You don't see – only what's in front of your eyes. So, it was fearful. In other places, it did become violent, there were shootings. We had someone from my unit who was supposed to do a different checkpoint and he was shot in his knee, and he became handicapped after that. And he had his whole military career in front of him because he was in this technological unit, he was supposed to go forward for many years, and it just stopped everything for him. But that again, that's just something I heard, I wasn't present there.

But the rest of my military service was kind of this game. I was mostly an instructor. So I had all these new soldiers coming and I was training them in their military professions. But it was all practicing, all training, never something actually related to combat. So, I wasn't very aware of my potential part in it – actually, until I watched *Saving Private Ryan*.

RR: Oh yes?

D: It was right in the middle of my (service)... when I came back from Gaza. It was released then and I went to see it, and it really hit me in a very bad way.

RR: Oh. In what sense?

D: Nightmares. I could see myself in this situation. I was probably over-sympathising with them. So, that was the emotion. But it was very short periods of time, and the rest of it was pretty peaceful, it you can call it that. Ideologically I was ok with it – it looked reasonable for me. There's a whole kind of educational stream around the military – that it's something that you don't touch even if they do something bad you go to the ones who make the decisions, the politicians, you keep the army out of it.

So, in that sense, I felt that I was doing the job I was supposed to do. I'm not the one who is supposed to give the answers to anyone who doesn't agree with it – and I was not aware of people presenting any questions back then.

RR: (*looking at clock*) I want to respect your time, so just one last question for today if that's alright?

D: (*affirms*)

RR: Because you've mentioned it again – asking questions – that it seems to have escalated, that you started asking a few questions and then more and more. I'm just wondering, what kinds of questions? Or what kinds of ideas were you questioning as part of that?

D: (*short pause - considering*) ... I must say I noticed it much better when I accompanied processes where others did it. As a practitioner, I accompanied other people doing it. For myself, I am not sure if it was like this. But I guess the first thing that you ask

yourself when you see people fighting each other, or fighting you ... which I guess is more alarming .... is 'why?' 'why are they doing it – what's wrong?'"

And the first answer you get when you don't want to really go too deep with it is that we tend to the kind of psychological answers – they're either anti-Semitic or they just hate you, they were born hating, it's something of their culture, they come from a very violent culture. And you will not accept any other situation otherwise they would be ruling you, so you have to be on top. They're control freaks – things of that sort.

The question is whether these answers satisfy you or not. And I think as I proceeded more, both with my studies and self-reflection, and the experiences I started having, these answers seemed less and less satisfying. Especially because, going back to the very superficial comment kind of thing, you meet people and they're like you, more or less. So you can say 'ok, but they are not typical' but also, 'ok they are not typical but how come there are some who are good people and others who are not?'. What is the difference? What happened there? Maybe they are not so different...

And you can also listen, and they give you their own answers, and then they ask you (questions) – and you realise that you also do not come from a very righteous kind of people. And what do you do about it?

So, what do you actually do with those people from your in-group who do all kinds of things that you don't agree with? Call them esoteric kind of extremists who have nothing to do with the goodness of your group, or realise that you are not as flawless as you thought? And then you think 'personally, how would you behave in this situation?'

So gradually, and with each step you take, you are willing to be challenged more. So, this for me, it was a kind of conceptual turning point - speaking about me personally, it's very hard to speak about my group, there's more than enough not very pleasant Jewish-Israelis who could easily explain how most of the world doesn't like us very much. Meeting them trekking down in South America or in the Far East or India, I can very easily see why Israelis are not very popular people. But that's an easy kind of answer. It might be true but it's easy, it's not profound enough.

And then you think of yourself, 'ok what would do you do in this situation?' 'What would you do if your life experiences would have had you experience things that fortunately you didn't have to – what then?'

I really liked what Kevin – that's why I took some of Lévinas' books here because he spoke about recognition of 'moral vulnerability'. That you are able to conduct immoral actions, without too much effort. And once you acknowledge that, you can actually become much more modest – in the sense that I am a person and forgiving both to yourself and to others. Not forgiving from this unpleasant place – I'm involved in this Abrahamic inter-faith group and they are very much interconnected Muslims and Jews and Christians - 'we have one Father who is God', 'we are all one'. That is so patronising towards the atheists. 'Oh my god, there is atheism here in New Zealand, it's such a threat to us all, it's such a disaster!'

I'm not sure how you say it in English, in Hebrew you say .... Tinok Shenishbah. It means like a baby being captured, he doesn't really understand why but he was led to the wrong way, something like that.

RR: Like being brainwashed or something?

D: To some extent yes, but brainwashed and you are someone who is not able to make any judgment on this. So not this, I don't like it very much, especially being closer to the Atheists than to them ... but they don't have enough Jews so I had to join!

No, but not from this patronising place, but from a very human place, saying 'we are humans, we have a lot of flaws, it's our nature but it's our duty to see what we can do with it'. That's why I like the social psychological perspective, because it doesn't see humans as perfect but it can see potential – not that much, but still they say 'ok, but we can work with it'. They don't give up.

And I think in this process, these questions, once you realise that you are not perfect – personally, not only in your group – from there it is easier to stop asking answers, start giving questions. Well, stop asking questions and start giving answers.

But also, keep always in mind that 'I still might be mistaken'. I mean, I never preach to anyone to stop going to their military service duty, for example. Not because I believe they should do it, but because I don't think it's something that I can ... my integrity doesn't allow me to preach something this radical that has very serious consequence, it might have, for a person. It's completely a personal decision. There are people who preach it and support it and advocate for it. I don't. And still I have my answers, for me.

RR: Well, that's wonderful – thank you very much. I'm going to stop recording now.

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## INTERVIEW 2

### SAME DATE AND LOCATION

RR: Ok, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview in Dunedin, 21<sup>st</sup> May, continuing by mutual agreement. I'm going to ask some sort of semi-structured questions.

Umm... you've talked a good bit about motivations to work for peace, about how you first got involved in that work.... I'm just wondering what your goals were when you made that decision. Did you have a clear goal or what was sort of going on?

D: Hmm... I must say that my goals were always – well I am kind of value driven in the sense that all my classmates from my ex-school went into IT kind of professions and I'm the only one who went to study psychology and then conflict resolution – but in my practice my main challenge and motivation are professional. So, I participated, for example, in several encounter groups and usually didn't like what I saw in terms of facilitation, and I thought I could do it better actually, that I had something to contribute to it.

And also, I found myself very kind of.... I think intrigued, and alert to people, and people's responses, when I'm working in a peopled environment which is not safe in the sense that you know it's not predictable –it kind of keeps me on my toes, it's something that I enjoy doing. I guess I get good feedback.

So, these are more the kind of things that I chose to do. I think I found myself thinking in terms of what I want to promote in terms of values, what I believe in, but then I also looked at what are the skills I actually have, and the things I like to do. Because I could be just the same and be a political activist, writing petitions and advocating, but it's just not something I'm good at or interested to do. In that sense, my motivation was more professional than personal.

RR: Cool, yeah. You've also spoken a bit about the society, obviously that you grew up in, and your experiences with confrontation if not direct violence. How do you think that has affected you?

D: Hmm....

RR: Has it contributed to a motivation to work for peace, or has it made it harder to work for peace, you know?

D: It's funny because in the place I come from we don't really speak about it in these terms, we don't work for peace as something viable – probably, realistically speaking, my daughters will see something resembling peace come. So, we don't see ourselves as making peace, like promoting peace, it's not anything of this kind. At most, we try to connect people, to make people believe that a different reality might be possible, to make them see themselves, and others, in a different light – things like that. We don't use this kind of big words.

Saying that, still, I acquired a lot of tools and skills, doing that from group facilitation to mediation – all kinds of things that really improve your communication skills and interpersonal skills. So, it's funny because yesterday I spoke with a friend of mine in Israel on Skype and he – something completely irrelevant - he started a business not that long ago and now he has a conflict with someone and we had a long talk on how to handle it. He's in a sort of crisis right now because the other business partner is also his neighbour and they were friends and now things are tense. So, I talked him through this kind of process of how to relate to it, how to handle it, what kind of communication we can have here. And he told me that of all the – and we've been friends for 25 years now, something like that, very old friends – and he said that the advice I gave him was completely different from all the other advice he was given from other people. So, I guess I hear about this kind of a situation, I cannot imagine a solution in which communication with the other side is not involved. Many other people told him to stay away from him and leave him be.

I guess also in my personal life, being a parent, I am constantly negotiating things with very good negotiators usually! (*laughs*)

RR: I can imagine! (*laughs*).

D: I find myself to be in very bad negotiating positions. But you can create a sort of different discourse at home. Sometimes it works – it's not something perfect but you do the things like parenthood, like the relationships with your partners and co-workers, in a different way.

So, it kind of shapes the person you are, eventually. It is a question of the chicken and egg probably, because only certain people who get into this kind of line of work, but I can say that it has had a direct influence on me. And I know this about myself. It's easier for me to learn something more formally and then practice it – not the other way around. Not because I'm practicing something that I'm good at and then doing it.

RR: I wanted to ask you a bit about your sense of group identity. I know you know lots about social psychology, and people being more closely with one group than others. So I was just wondering, how would *you* describe your sense of group identity, your social identity?

D: Hmm.... I think that one of the things – and also one thing I have more ability for things like that – I learned not to look for the easy way out. Because it is very easy for me to, and to an extent it can also be pretty justifiable, to say I do not belong to this group anymore. I don't hold their views, I don't relate to them, I don't like the way they behave, the way they perceive other peoples, so I am just, I am looking for another, any suggestions? It's always the easy way out. I saw people do it, and never believed them.

Because.... It's very tricky group identity – you don't really pick the groups your identity is associated with. You are either born into or thrown into.... And also it's not black and white – a lot of good things I see in my in-group.

And yet, it may become very difficult to practice it in your daily life, this belonging to your in-group. This in-group, especially lately, it has become less and less bearable to live in. So this is also very dynamic.

RR: Yes, I was going to ask, do you feel your sense of identity has changed over your lifetime?

D: I think one of the sort of.... Hmm.... I want to say I have a good answer for that, but I am not sure, actually. Because my instinct would be to take full responsibility for my group, ok? That's the only way I could hold it down with anyone else, in that sense.

On the other hand, there is so much I can do in order to keep my in-group in the spectrum of values which is tolerable for me – in terms of values, in terms of norms, in terms of how you behave to one another, how you relate to each other, how you behave to *other* groups. This is kind of tricky for me. I have a sort of fantasy, or aspiration, or utopia of being very happy to be a member of this cosmopolitan universal group of peace-builders who are displaced from anyone else. A lot of Jews try to do it that way.



Most of the attempts to create a universal global identity came from Jews – from Communism to Esperanto, to humanism, with Spinoza. And I think it's not a coincidence, a lot of Jews try to look for ways out of this kind of very dense Jewish identity, which really kind of controls every aspect of your life. Especially in Israel where it's much more dominant – you don't have any alternative to that, and it's supported by the law, actually.

So, it's a dialectic kind of thing. I must say, since we came here to Dunedin we have been visiting the Synagogue, it's a small synagogue, a small community...

RR: Hmm, yes, I think I have seen it.

D: Yes, it's not very far. A few dozen people, most of them don't show up regularly, and in any case, they have a meeting there once every two or three weeks – it's not very intensive. But I think we got there something that I didn't feel in Israel, un-judgmental acceptance of whoever you are. Jews and non-Jews are invited there. Jews come because they are either aware of it, or looking for some sense of community but you're not being judged, you're not being told what to say, it's completely equal – men and women are on equal terms there and women actually lead the prayer there.

That also shows that there is an alternative. It was easier for me to relate to the Jews here than to many of the Jews in Israel. So, this in-group thing is kind of complicated. At the political level I kind of accept myself to be a Jewish Israeli with everything that involves, I hope my personality compensates for some of my reputation as an Israeli.

But I also understand that not everyone will like me, being an Israeli, and I cannot fight it. I mean, for example, coming here I didn't know what someone like (a name of a mutual Palestinian colleague) would think about me. And I was in situations before where I met Palestinians and some of them judged me before they knew me. I am aware that not everybody is supposed to be my friend, and I understand why it is.

RR: Interesting. And just, I suppose, still on the subject of identity, I'm sure you grew up with impressions of the out-group, the Palestinians, has that changed over time? Or what would be your understanding of them now?

D: Well, as I told you, I grew up with a lot of contact with, pretty close contact with Palestinians. They are Israeli citizens, but in that sense, they are Palestinians, part of Arab culture. So, if it (*opinion of them*) has improved, it was never bad as such.

I think it became more complex, as much as I don't like the Israeli people as a people, I don't like the Palestinian people as a people as well. I don't like very much any people as people. But the Palestinian collective as such may have made mistakes with atrocities both to my people and its own people, so I'm not a 'people' kind of person, not in that sense. But individual Palestinians, I am fully acquainted and aware of many Palestinian traditions which my people would have had more – things like respect for people, like manners, just simple manners. Hospitality, things like that. Not in a very stereotypical kind of pretentious way, but in the way you treat a person who is your guest.

And in a sense, I think because one of my insights about me being a Jew in Israel is that to some extent I am a guest. I really appreciate it when I – considering everything - I also get sometimes get a very strong feeling of hospitality also from Palestinians. For me, it's not very trivial. I don't know if I would have been this kind of .... If I would have had this big of a heart in their position.

It's complicated. I am also aware – and I have very good friends so I know it from first hand – the problems of Palestinian society and Arab society in general - women's rights, this kind of very intense social pressure and peer pressure upon everything, these norms that are being imposed upon every person in Palestinian society. There are of course exceptions, but not all of them, that's also ok.

It's complicated, yeah...

RR: I'm sure it is, yeah. Thanks, that's very interesting. I know it's not easy to put this into words or to speak about it in simple ways. But I would like to move on. You've mentioned about being value-driven, and this is something I'm very interested to know more about with people who do this kind of work. So, what would you see as your most important personal values, which values are really important to you?

D: Well... After all, my most important value would be people-orientated values. Not necessarily values of justice – not because I'm not aware of it, or don't have a sense of what is just and what is not, I have a very full sense of that – but that it's not something that drives me in my choices, in my professional choices.

And... people orientation as a value is something that I didn't see in this way in many places. There is whole ethical discussion about it in mediation, but.... I think that seeing the person.... I also... it's hard for me to say that but I don't love people as such. There are people who are – I see it a lot with religious people; they are so compassionate, they are so merciful towards everyone, as a straying sheep – that's something you say about someone who did something bad, right? It's something very compassionate to say about someone. He just didn't find the right way, we can bring him back. We can turn the second cheek....

RR: Turn the other cheek, uh-huh.

D: Turn the other cheek, right. It's not really the Jewish way of thinking in general but I'm not so compassionate towards people. I think people should take responsibility for their actions. People in general, they're not bad but they're very ego-centric... But still, working with people, whoever they may be, I would consider to be the highest value of my professional choice.

What to work with them to go towards, then we are talking about justice, social justice, historical justice... nothing is sacred but at least the high importance of life over anything else - over land, over religion, humanistic values in essence I would say.

These are kind of the values but they are all subject to- there's a saying in Hebrew, I'm not sure if it is translated from English or not, that you don't want to throw away the water with a baby...

RR: Yeah, we say 'don't throw out the baby with the bathwater'.

D: Yeah, yeah ...

RR: Don't throw out everything, keep what's good.

D: Yeah, exactly. So, there are people who are so much orientated towards peace that on the way they will lose the person they wanted to educate. Educate also in a dialogical way now necessarily in a patronistic way but, they are so into what is just and what is right and what needs to be done, and you just need to understand eventually so that we have this peace we are all talking about, that they lose their audience – miles away.

So, I don't think it's the right way to go. But again, I understand why people choose it. It's much easier on your sense of integrity, because you are complete with what you do, you believe and you follow these values, whoever doesn't cope with it you don't have to cooperate with them. It's easier in that sense – you don't have to contain anything or accommodate anything. You do whatever you think is right. But eventually you don't have anyone to do it with.

RR: Related to that... the idea of worldview is very hard to get at and when you have one, obviously, it is just how the world works as far as you are concerned so it is difficult to be aware of it... but what I'd just like to ask, I suppose, really, is do you have a sense that there is a purpose to life? Or what do you see as the purpose of life or the best things that we humans can do here on earth if we live in an empty random universe, nonetheless what goals should we have for ourselves?

D: Hmm... There is no purpose, as in the sense of some kind of transcendent thing. I don't think so. And if there was, it would be a pretty stupid way to fulfil it, putting us here to do it. I think there is a given situation – we are here, and people are what they are and they are not what they are not. So we have to play the cards we are dealt with.

And eventually, I don't expect much more from people than to just get along with each other, to kind of control or ... sort of make boundaries to what they allow themselves to do, in case they disagree with each other. People as such will always have differences. In the place I come from it is considered to be a good thing that you keep disagreeing with each other.

It's really funny, I just met here a professor in the economics department. He did a half-year sabbatical in Israel so we met through a mutual acquaintance. And he said he really likes Israelis because they tell you on the spot what they think about your idea. If it's good they tell you it's good, but usually they don't. Or if it's bad they tell you can fix it using this and that, or just leave it because it's not worth the effort. Ad he said that

would have spared me so much trouble if it was in the culture here. He grew up in Dunedin. So, I guess, that's not a typical New Zealander way of thinking.

So, I come from a place where it's normal to dispute, to argue, to criticise each other, in a much harsher way than is done here. It has also some kind of bad results, as you can imagine – people have no boundaries, people don't think of other people as subjects only as objects to their own criticism. And sometimes it can be embarrassing when Israelis and non-Israelis have these encounters. Israelis lack self-awareness – so it's very hard for them to agree on anything.

But coming from this background taught me not to be afraid very much of conflict. When I did my mediation training, the practicum in court – I was already a pretty experienced group facilitator. And I got a case, like a practicum – so someone mediates and the rest are observing and they give feedback – so I was sitting there and it was a very emotional argument and the Israelis started shouting at each another, actually. It's not like they just got red in the face and sometime someone steps out and leaves the room. There were all kinds of crises going on. And they asked me later how I could stay calm in this situation. So I said that when I facilitated the encounter groups of Jews and Palestinians, I have twenty people in the room that want to kill each other. So two people in the room who want to kill each other, it's not such a big deal.

You can get used to this kind of ... or you get a higher threshold of sensitivity to conflict. But people are people, they are in conflict all the time. If you can contain this in some sort of normative framework – which Israel lacks but you can find it here for sure.

It's really funny because (a name of a mutual Maori colleague) said in her presentation 'I live in conflict, hopefully sometime it will be resolved, but right now I just enjoy to see the process of its resolution'. It's funny to look at New Zealand as a place in conflict, right? For some for sure, but that's an exception of people. I am not sure how New Zealanders would behave as practitioners of facilitation in the Middle East, in these kind of encounters. But, ok. That's life.

RR: You sort of mention 'people are people'. So how would you describe human nature? What's your view of it? Is it fixed? Is it evolving? Is it good, bad, mixed? All of that....

D: I would say the most fundamental human trait is being self-centred... or ego-centric. People are driven by their own feelings, ambitions, needs to survive. There are things that are built on it, and people have the potential to do much, much more. But in order to fulfil this potential you have to work with people, you have to do some sort of process.

I'm not sure if it's improving or not. It's very dynamic. People, at different points in their lives, they feel very different. They are very susceptible to the influence of life experience. I think you can - with the same intervention or the same action for example, or even argument - you can influence a person who just experienced some

sort of very emotionally-strong experience, while it would not have any effect on another person who noting very significant had happened to them.

So, human nature is something tricky. As I was saying, I really like the perspective saying that people are very far from being perfect – not because they are bad. There is no such thing as a bad person, as such. But people are self-centred and when circumstances are right they can be very vicious to each other, because they are self-centred. Not, in the first place at least, because they want to hurt each other but because that's how they think it works, to fulfil their ego-centric goals or ambitions or needs.

But, the human intellect can provide alternatives for that. And I've seen it happen. But still, it goes against the natural flow. So, it's like a salmon fish that swims upstream – you have to keep on swimming. If you have to stop swimming, life's flow will take you to that side, this natural way of being. And in a way, this whole profession was invented as a tool to swim upstream.

RR: That's a good metaphor! And then, in terms of relationships between human beings, you've seen it's often governed by self-interest and conflict, but in an ideal world how would you like to see people treat each other and work with each other, if you could 'wave your magic wand'?

D: Hmm.... *(pause 10 secs – thinking carefully)* I would say that... essentially, at the end of everything, 'live and let live' would be a motto I can live with, quite happily I guess.

There are more, kind of, better things to aspire to – social solidarity, interdependence, empathy, things that give an added value for society, because if we happen to live in groups and not separately, we might as well make the best of it.

And because I am also aware that there are certain societies that were able to advance very much in this direction – it gives hope that it's possible. It's something at least that you can... make as a goal, without being pathetic about it. But I guess it's not something that you can expect from everyone, in this kind of circumstances.

As a first goal, to just be able to live your life in peace, it's not a bad place to begin.

RR: I'm just watching the time *(looking up at clock on wall)* ...

D: That's ok.

RR: Just two more questions I'll ask then. Have there been any particular role models in your life, in terms of this work? Either individuals that you've personally met or people that you've read about or just sort of, you know, become aware of...

D: Yeah. I think.... Well, during my M.A. studies we had a three-day workshop with USIP and they brought some of their fellows. These were basically scholar-practitioners and they all had PhDs, and had all taken part in international work of peace-building and conflict resolution and they did these workshops, with each of

them telling their own experience from different parts of the world. And I thought to myself, if there is anything I would like to be, it's one of these people.

RR: Cool. That actually kind of leads on to my last question, which is, in terms of other people working in their field, are their admirable qualities or common qualities that you've noticed? So, maybe, what was it about these guys that you liked?

D: First of all, I think there is a ... they are completely non-judgmental, they are very accepting. I don't know if in terms of values, their inter-psycho, but in their appearance and the energy that surrounds them....

They are very smart with people, they can communicate with practically anyone. They are very, very, profoundly self-aware. They are very aware of the emotions that erupt among them, during their work.

They understand human dynamics, group dynamics. They understand people, how they feel. They can relate to people, and they can make these people believe that they can relate to them – which is not less important.

They are knowledgeable, they learn from mistakes, they can reflect. They are not alarmed by criticism – they have enough self-confidence to be open to criticism.

And I think, the most important thing, they have a lot of self-humour. They don't take themselves too seriously. Because I think that's a big mistake for practitioners, people who put themselves at some stage in the middle of things and stop considering themselves as a tool, as a vessel, as the purpose of it.

And you see things – (a name of a mutual colleague) called them the 'grand-daddies' of the profession. Well, they publish too many books and articles and they were invited to too many conferences, and they reach this point where they cannot make any mistakes, and if they cannot make any mistakes it means that everyone around them is making mistakes. Or how come it doesn't work?

It doesn't happen to everybody, but it happens to some. So, you have to, in that sense, to be willing to let go of your ego. It's not very easy, especially for men, especially for educated people, scholars.

The scholar-practitioner thing is funny because in the scholastic world you kind of, you have your salary if you are at a university, but other than that the only thing you have is your name. You need to get credit by anyone who refers to your article, you need your article to be referred to as many times as possible. You need your name to be on the title of as many articles – it doesn't matter what they say actually, what's written there. Just that your name was published in this and that article.

I don't know how it is here, but in Israel it's awful in academia. You are the examiner of other colleagues' students and if you give them good grades then in turn they will give your students good grades. Or if not, the other way around. So, it's all ego, basically.

But you have to gain your education and your qualifications, so you have to be there, and then have to get out. And to be seen as a professor. So, Ed Garcia, he is a professor, everywhere it says he is a professor. But then when he sits down in West Nigeria, he is not this professor. Otherwise, no one will have any common ground to speak with him. It's very tricky. And the good scholar-practitioners know how to work with this.

RR: Agreed! You have put it very well. So just, yeah, thank-you so much for taking part.

D: Sure.

RR: This has been fascinating, and given me lots to think about, and lots to transcribe!

*(Both laugh).*

## Appendix B: Information Sheet for Participants

Reference Number: 15/155

[Date]



### ***MILITARY ORDER DISOBEDIENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION***

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS**

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

#### **What is the Aim of the Project?**

This project aims to identify and conceptualize processes of personal transformation in conflict situations, by analysing stories of soldiers in Israel, who, during or following their military service, chose to disobey a particular order or object to carry on their military service altogether, due to conscientious reasons.

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for Daniel Fridberg's PhD diploma in Peace and Conflict Studies.

#### **What Type of Participants are being sought?**

In this research 30 interviews will be conducted with 19 - 50-year-old men, who served in the IDF for at least one year, and who have objected an order or refused to carry on their military duties for conscientious reasons, during either their mandatory or their reserve duty military service.

The participants' names are obtained in one of three ways: a) Through Daniel Fridberg's personal and professional networks; b) through snowball recruitment, where participants recommend the researchers to contact people whom they know, with the relevant background as stated above; c) Through NGO's supporting conscientious objectors, who may address some of the soldiers they are accompanying and ask them if they would be willing to participate in the research.

No payment will be offered to participants in this research.



### **What will Participants be Asked to Do?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in an interview over Skype for up-to two hours. Following this interview, we might ask you to answer some clarification or follow-up questions either by email or in a shorter Skype conversation of no longer than one hour.

In the interview you will be asked to tell about yourself and your personal life story, emphasizing, but not limited to, your military service and your experiences of and following it.

The interview does not intend to make you re-experience any uncomfortable or disturbing experiences that you met in the past. However, if during the interview you would feel uncomfortable for any reason, you may ask not to refer to certain aspects of your story or ask to discontinue the interview altogether.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?**

The interview will be recorded both in video and audio by the software Talk Helper - Free Skype Recorder. The interview will be transcribed by Daniel Fridberg. Once your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of it and have the option to add, delete or edit it, to the degree that you feel it fully reflects your experience and your personal thoughts. This will be done before the interviews are analysed and conclusions are drawn by the researchers.

Anonymity of the participants is very important in this research project. The transcript of your interview will not have any personal or contact details of you and will be stored on a password-protected computer, under an alias name. Your contact information (Name, email address and phone number) will be stored on a separate computer, protected by password as well. The data can only be accessed by the researchers in this project, Dr. Katerina Standish, Prof. Kevin Clements and Daniel Fridberg. However, and despite all measures taken to insure anonymity, it is important to note that anonymity cannot be 100% guaranteed.

**Therefore, you are free to refuse to take part in this research or not to answer any particular question, which you feel uncomfortable with or think might put you in any kind of risk.**

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned above will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for **at least 5 years** in secure storage. Any personal information held on you (contact details, audio or video tapes, after they have been transcribed) will be destroyed at the completion of the research even though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

Upon request, you will be able to receive a copy of any publication based on the findings of this research.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes your life story and anything related to your military service. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **What if Participants have any Questions?**

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either: -

*Daniel Fridberg*  
National Centre for Peace and  
Conflict Studies

and

*Dr. Katerina Standish*  
National Centre for Peace and  
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Email Address:

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email [gary.witte@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gary.witte@otago.ac.nz)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix C: Consent Form for Participants

Reference Number: 15/155

[Date]

**MILITARY ORDER DISOBEDIENCE:**  
AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about.  
All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that: -

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information (Name, email address and phone number) may be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes personal life story, emphasizing, but not limited to, military service and your experiences of and following it. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....  
(Signature of participant)

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed Name)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +64 3 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix D: Interview Outline

### **MILITARY ORDER DISOBEDIENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION**

#### INTERVIEW OUTLINE

Before the interview begins, the information sheet and consent form will be presented and any questions or concerns addressed to the satisfaction of the participant before the process continues. The researcher will ensure that the participant understands the purpose of the research, the risks and benefits to themselves, and has given informed consent. The researcher will emphasize the anonymity and confidentiality of the interview and its voluntary nature.

Interview outline:

Please tell me about yourself, your life story...

The researcher will follow-up with questions relating to the life story, to check for clarifications and to seek more detail on information shared which seems particularly relevant to the research questions. If not addressed during the life story, some of the following issues will be further explored by the researcher (sample questions are provided in italics):

- Early childhood and family background
  - Were politics often discussed in your family?
  - What were the dominant political opinions and stands in your family?
  - Have you ever met Palestinians as a child? Did your family have any interaction with Palestinians? What kind?
- Adolescence and educational system
  - How would you define your political stands as an adolescent?
  - What were your friends' opinions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Were they similar to yours?
  - What in your experience of the educational system addressed the military service and how?
  - What, if any, were the attitudes towards conscientious objectors in your social circles at that time?
- Military service
  - How happy were you to enlist? Would you have done it, if it was not mandatory to conscript?
  - How were you feeling as a soldier towards your military unit and your comrades?
  - Which experiences in your military service you think were significant in the process leading to your objection?
  - Which actions did find hard to justify as a soldier?
  - Was there a tipping point, following which you decided to object? If so, what was it?

- Military objection and consequences
  - How and when did you act upon your decision to object?
  - What were the implications, formal and informal, for your objection?
  - What would you advise your child regarding military service?
  - In retrospect, how do you personally understand the process you underwent?
- Depth of transformation

I will now describe to you three different types of transformation narratives and ask you to say which one captures, or is the closest to, the process you feel you underwent or when can you position on the continuum of transformation that these narratives draw?

1. The first narrative is this: When you look at yourself today in comparison to the young man you were when you enlisted, you feel these are two entirely different people. Each of you had different values, different sets of priority, and understanding of the world. If you had an opportunity to speak with this young man, to tell him everything that happened to you and everything you know today, he would have probably not understand you, not agree with you, and certainly not imagine himself acting in the future the way you did.
2. The second narrative is this: Looking back at the person you were at the time of your enlistment, you feel you are essentially the same person. Both of you hold the same values, have similar sets of priorities, and the same beliefs. The difference between us is what I learned about the real, about what is happening in the OPT in a way that is very different than I thought before. And so, if I had a chance to talk to that young man and tell him everything I learned and know, he would also object instead of enlisting.
3. The third narrative is this: Like in the second narrative, you and your younger self are essentially the same person. However, the thing that changed is the outside political and social reality (e.g. assassination of PM Yitzhak Rabin and the end of the Oslo accords) and so, if you had a chance to tell him what you know now, he would say that at the time you enlisted that was the right thing to do but also, that considering the political developments you told him about, your objection was the right thing to do when you did it.